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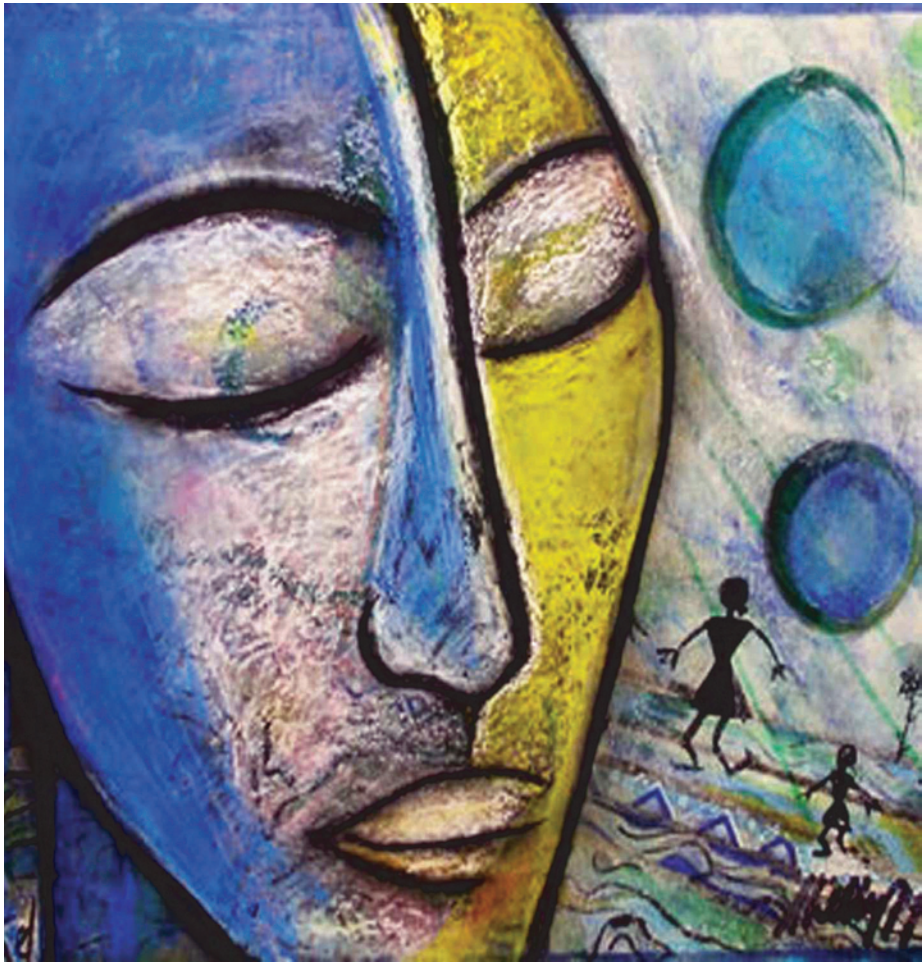

General Semantics in India

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Guest Editor
Steve Stockdale

Associate Editor
Andrea Johnson
Contributing Editor
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• IN THIS ISSUE •

Steve Stockdale, Guest Editor

In the general semantics course I teach at Texas Christian University (TCU), we discuss three quotes that deal with different dimensions of *perspective*.

From Cassius J. Keyser:

> "The present is no more exempt from the sneer of the future than the past has been."

From Aldous Huxley:

> "A culture cannot be discriminatingly accepted, much less be modified, except by persons who have seen through it—by persons who have cut holes in the confining stockade of verbalized symbols and so are able to look at the world and, by reflection, at themselves, in a new and relatively unprejudiced way. … A man who knows that there have been many cultures, and that each culture claims to be the best and truest of all, will find it hard to take too seriously the boastings and dogmatizings of his own tradition."

And again from Keyser:

> "The next-most difficult thing in the world is to get perspective. The most difficult is to keep it."

Thanks to Mr. Balvant K. Parekh from Mumbai, India, Andrea Johnson and I experienced a variety of *perspectives* during an 18-day visit to western India this past fall. This special issue of *ETC* pays tribute to Mr. Parekh and represents a small step toward "keeping" these perspectives by documenting them within these pages. We hope this special issue serves a modest time-binding purpose and proves worthy of your time and attention.

This issue includes five sections dedicated to India, then concludes with the regular Dates and Indexes feature.

We begin by introducing the artist who provided our cover art, Shelly Jyoti. Next, Andrea and I offer our perspectives on the trip, how it came about, what we did, where we did it, and personal reflections on our 18-day adventure.

Next we introduce Mr. Balvant K. Parekh, IGS member and *ETC* reader for 25 years, who arranged for and sponsored our trip to "increase awareness for general semantics" in India. Andrea and I found Mr. Parekh to embody the highest ideals of "the new sort of man" that Korzybski described. We are pleased to present four short testimonies, or "felicitations," about Mr. Parekh from the differing perspectives of his daughter, granddaughter, personal assistant, and a recipient of his patronage.

We conclude the introduction to Mr. Parekh by excerpting his own writings and quotes from others that he has found important enough to compile in his own publication, *Gamtano Kariye Gulal*. From his native Gujarati language, this translates generally as, "*If you get what you like, don't keep it; rather, share it.*" He has compiled, published, and distributed this journal — free of charge — since 2003. Each issue has included a section dedicated to General Semantics with reprinted articles from *ETC*, *General Semantics Bulletin*, and even the IGS website. We are very happy to now employ reciprocal time-binding and thank him for making some of his compilations available to be reprinted here.

In the third section devoted to India, we take great pleasure and pride in publishing papers from the perspectives of new friends who have only been introduced to general semantics through this trip. These articles include personal reflections, two short reports from local newspapers, and extended analyses and evaluations which we hope you find challenging, insightful, and worthwhile. In particular, please compare the tenets of 20th-century general semantics with the ancient religion of Jainism, or Jain Dharma. Are there striking similarities of orientation? *Maybe*.

A short fourth section serves as a postscript to the trip from the perspectives of the three individuals most responsible for realizing Mr. Parekh's intentions: Professor Sitanshu Yashaschandra, Professor Prafulla Kar, and of course, Mr. Parekh himself.

The final section dedicated to India includes perspectives which, arguably, may be the most important articles in this issue as well as the most controversial. They deserve, therefore, more than just a passing summary.

The section begins with excerpts from Nobel Prize winner Amartya Sen's presentation at the 2005 Jamnalal Bajaj Awards, which we have titled "Gandhian Values and Terrorism." (1) Professor Sen, of Trinity College, Cambridge (United Kingdom) received the Nobel Prize for Economics in 1998 "for his contributions to welfare economics." (2) The Jamnalal Bajaj Awards are presented annually by the Jamnalal Bajaj Foundation, named for the close associate of Mahatma Gandhi and loyal member of the Indian National Congress who died in 1942, five years before Indian independence. (3)

In his remarks — delivered two years after the armed forces of the United States and Great Britain (principally) invaded-liberated Iraq — Professor Sen compares and contrasts the "Anglo-American initiative" against terrorism with Gandhiji's non-violent, yet still confrontational, resistance to British occupation and foreign rule. Some may object to these overtly political remarks, which undoubtedly reflect Professor Sen's own personal perspective. However, in the context of educating and enlightening our own views, we in "the West" will do well to listen to a voice that harkens not only from another geographic perspective, but also invokes the historical lessons that we seem to have either ignored or never learned. Can it be that Gandhiji was correct in asserting, as Sen claims, that "you cannot defeat nastiness, including violent nastiness, unless you yourself shun similar nastiness"? *Maybe*.

We conclude with three articles from a remarkable individual who, sadly, we have lost track of over the past six decades – Mr. Surindar S. Suri, a native of Calcutta (now *Kolkata*). Mr. Suri, then 26 years old, attended two seminars with Alfred Korzybski at the Institute in Lakeville, Connecticut in the summer of 1947 and the following winter. Even before attending these seminars, Suri wrote a series of articles published in *Mysindia*, a periodical printed in Bangalore, under the title *Towards an Age of Science*. The 22,000-word series was condensed, edited, and then printed in *The Lakeville Journal*, the local newspaper in the spring of 1947. Sixty years later, *The Lakeville Journal* has granted us permission to reprint this article. We also include Suri's "notes" on the series, which provide some historical context for Korzybski's work and a concise and informative description of the abstracting process upon which general semantics is based.

The third Suri article, "Common Sense about India," is offered without apology, but requires explanation. In researching the Institute's archives, two drafts of this unpublished (to my knowledge) paper were found. This version appears to be the latter. Not knowing what happened to Mr. Suri, or what may have occurred with this paper over the years, I debated whether to include it in this issue. Clearly, readers should be cautioned that the evaluations and opinions represent those, I must assume, peculiar to Mr. Suri, a private Indian citizen at the time they were written in 1947 shortly after Indian independence from British rule.

We must remember that India's independence from Britain occurred coincident with the partitioning of India and the creation of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. Suri's "common sense" (circa 1947) therefore represents a descriptive, perhaps insightful, time capsule that seems especially poignant and relevant when read along side today's headlines.

As I write this, less than one week has elapsed since the assassination of Pakistan's opposition leader and former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto. In the six decades since Suri's "common sense," what has been 'learned,' and how has that

'learning' been applied throughout the Asian sub-continent, the Middle East, the Balkans, and the rest of the world?

And so we come back to *perspective* … about the difficulties inherent in gaining, and keeping, perspectives across the multitudinous dimensions of cultures, religions, politics, geographies, and histories. Is it possible that, as Mr. Parekh asserts, "general semantics is a very useful discipline which can be useful in living a saner life"? Is it possible that Professor Sen's prediction that "the disastrous consequences of defining people by their religious ethnicity … may well come back to haunt the country of the rulers themselves" applies as much in 2007 Iraq (with Sunni, Shiite, and Kurd) as it did in 1947 India (with Hindu, Moslem, and Sikh)? Could Mr. Suri's contention that "the solution of the world's problems must be sought in retraining human behavior … without sane and mentally healthy human beings there cannot be a rational and peaceful world" be as valid in 2007, or in 2067, as it was in 1947?

As the Jains might say, "*Maybe.*"

Notes

1. The full text of Professor Sen's presentation is available online at: http://www.mkgandhi.org/articles/g&world.htm.
2. http://nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/economics/laureates/1998/press.html
3. http://www.indianngos.com/ngosection/awardsjamnalalbajaj2.html

All photographs in this issue by Steve Stockdale, Andrea Johnson, or Stacy Stockdale, unless otherwise noted.

"The Alchemist"

In this one life we have, the daily mundane chores keep happening ...
it's important to introspect, meditate, and dream ...

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Shelly Jyoti is a visual and interdisciplinary artist based in Baroda, India. She received her master's degree in English literature in 1980 and further went to train as a fashion designer at India's premier fashion school, the National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT), in New Delhi.

Her interdisciplinary work in designing garments, drawing, painting, sculpture, and poetry writing has appeared in a number of solo and group exhibitions in India, North America, and Singapore over the past 10 years.

Her passion for art began at the very early age of six and continues even today just as passionately through different mediums of expressions and creative spaces.

She recently concluded a show in April 2007 of 180 paintings at the India Habitat Centre in New Delhi, which was very well received. Her upcoming events include a solo/invitational show at the Woman Made Art Gallery in Chicago in March 2008, titled, "Beyond Mithila-Exploring Decorative."

Amongst her recent published works are her paintings published by the University of Saint Xavier's, Chicago, and poems and paintings appearing in the Indian literature section of Sahitya Akedimi IL238 in 2007.

Shelly works on environmental projects and with special children with Autism disabilities in the capacity of a board member for organizations "Disha" and "Socleen" in Gujarat.

She has also received awards from the Management Institution of Baroda [BMA] in recognition of her work as an artist and also from NIFT as a designer with Traditional Art & Craft skill. She is invited to jury fashion shows and conducts workshops on Art and Fashions.

She is working as an independent researcher exploring the search for ethnic identity in costume history of India and its documentation through visual representation of 20th-century artists. Her works can be viewed at her website, www.shellyjyoti.com. Her email is: shellyjvoti12@yahoo.com.

GENERAL SEMANTICS IN INDIA: AN OVERVIEW

STEVE STOCKDALE*

Last April, I received an email from Mr. B.K. Parekh in Mumbai, India. He wrote to say that, "It was a painful surprise to note from *General Semantics Bulletin*, No. 72 that I am the only member of Institute of General Semantics in India." He went on to explain that he had arranged to sponsor a 3-day workshop at the Centre for Contemporary Theory in Vadodara (Baroda), north of Mumbai, in November. They expected 40-45 scholars from across India to attend. He requested that the Institute provide one "expert" who could travel to India to conduct the workshop, at Mr. Parekh's expense.

After consulting with Andrea Johnson, then-President of the IGS Board of Trustees, I responded to Mr. Parekh that we would gladly support his request, but offered an alternative. Given the travel requirements and the demands of teaching three full days, we felt it would be better to have two IGS "experts" support the workshop. If he would agree to cover the local expenses for two of us, I would donate some of my frequent flier miles for my airfare. He agreed, and so began six months of preparing for a halfway-around-the-world adventure.

The planning became a bit more complicated when we received an invitation to travel to Pakistan immediately after the trip to Vadodara. IGS member Mr. Usman Ghani, who now lives in nearby Irving, Texas, visited the Institute with his father, Mr. Mian Ghani, from Karachi, Pakistan, shortly after we had agreed to the India plans. Mian Ghani has had a long association with Grid International and its founder, Robert R. Blake. Professor Blake, who died a few years ago, is an Honorary Trustee of the Institute and was honored twice to give the prestigious Alfred Korzybski Memorial Lecture. Intrigued by general semantics through this connection, Mr. Ghani immediately invited us to give a seminar in Karachi upon learning of our plans for Vadodara. (Most unfortunately, due to the political developments in Pakistan

*Steve Stockdale lives in Fort Worth, TX. He teaches a course on general semantics at TCU, which last fall was added to the general catalog for the school. He recently resigned after four years as Executive Director of the Institute of General Semantics.

throughout late October, we made the very difficult decision to cancel the Pakistan seminar one day prior to the declaration of emergency in Pakistan.)

After Mr. Parekh accepted our proposal to send two people, he and his staff began to make additional arrangements for seminars and presentations in other venues. We ended up speaking to over 350 people at seven different locations, including:

- Mumbai University, with faculty and students from departments of History, Political Science, Sociology, Philosophy, Literature, and Linguistics.
- Pidilite Industries, Ltd, (of which Mr. Parekh is founder and Chairman) for directors, mangers, employees, and family members.
- Indian Institute of Technology (Mumbai), faculty and students.
- Bhavans Culture Center (Mumbai), with local authors, poets, artists, and cultural leaders.
- Gujarati Sahitya Parishad (Ahmedabad), founded by Mahatma Gandhi in 1920, for faculty and students
- H.M. Patel Institute of English at Sardar Patel University (Anand), for faculty and students.
- Centre for Contemporary Theory (Vadodara), Twelfth National Workshop (3 days). Sixty-eight professors and graduate students registered, with fifty-nine attending from as far away as New Delhi, Chennai, and Kashmir.

Mr. Parekh came to general semantics about 25 years ago through *ETC: A Review of General Semantics*. Much of his extensive knowledge and understanding of general semantics, which he demonstrated privately and during his remarks at each of the venues, came from reading articles in *ETC*.

A native of the state of Gujarat, Mr. Parekh has long lived according to the Gujarati tradition: "*If you get what you like; do not keep it, rather share it.*" So inspired, in 2003 he began compiling and publishing his own journal similar to *ETC* in which he collected interesting articles, stories, quotations, etc. To date he's published seven issues and sent approximately 1200 copies of each issue to a distribution list of friends, family, colleagues, and anyone who requests a copy. Every issue has a section dedicated to GS in which he has reprinted four or five articles from *ETC*. Perhaps a dozen people who attended the 3-day workshop in Vadodara mentioned that they learned of general semantics for the first time through Mr. Parekh's free journal.

Mr. Parekh arranged to make copies of Ken Johnson's *General Semantics: An Outline Survey* and provided a copy to everyone at each of the venues. Additionally, for the Vadodara workshop, Professor Prafulla Kar (Director of the Centre for

Contemporary Theory) published a bound volume of eleven articles I suggested as pre-reading for the participants. This was distributed to all registrants about six weeks before the workshop and, unlike our usual experiences in the U.S., the participants seemed to be quite familiar with the readings by the time we started the workshop.

The company he founded, Pidilite Industries, Ltd (www.pidilite.com) is ranked by the *Economic Times of India* as the 131st largest public company in India, with annual sales of over $350M. Their core business is adhesives, featuring the "Elmer's glue" of India which they developed, as well as an entire line of industrial bonding materials. His daughter Kalpana proudly related that, although he did not have a chemical background, he mixed the first batch of Fevicol (the glue brand name) in their home bathtub. He then saw to it that his younger brother and one son earned graduate degrees in Chemical Engineering from the University of Wisconsin. They and most of the family's sons continue to manage and direct the affairs of the diversified company.

Mr. Parekh developed Parkinson's disease seven years ago. He's done a lot of personal research about the disease and has access to the very best medical attention, so he and his family are optimistic about his condition and prognosis. Andrea and I had little trouble understanding his bright, enthusiastic English.

He was treated as something like a "revered godfather" everywhere we went. Several people went to great lengths to explain what a wonderful, caring, and benevolent "philanthropist" he was. Among the stories we heard:

- The youngest daughter of his nephew and niece (now 10) was born deaf. Diagnosed early, she underwent a successful cochlear implant when she was 18 months old in the U.S. Mr. Parekh's brother, Narendra Parekh (and the family) not only paid for the surgery and almost a year's stay in the U.S., but they also funded a private hearing institute in Mumbai for research, study, and investigation into making implants more affordable for Indian citizens.
- He donated funds to build an entire academic building in Ahmedabad at the Gujurati Sahitya Parishad, and insisted that his name not be used.
- He funded the establishment of a Center for the Popularization of Science in conjunction with the Indian Planetary Society in Mumbai.
- He funded the Centre for Contemporary Theory in Baroda, which hosted our 3-day workshop.
- Pidilite is one of the leading-edge progressive companies in India in terms of valuing employees. It was pointed out by several people that few companies provided the benefits that Pidilite offered, including onsite swimming pool and fitness facilities for all employees.

Through the Pidilite Marketing/Communications manager, Mr. Parekh arranged extended interviews for us with reporters from five newspapers: *The Hindustan Times*, *DNA* (*Daily News & Analysis*), *The Times of India*, *The Economic Times of India*, and a local Gujarati-language paper, *Divya Bhaskar.*

Mr. Parekh has a broad vision for general semantics in India. I committed to him that I personally would do everything I can to assist him, and to the limited degree I could speak on behalf of the Institute, that the Institute would support him. He and Professor Kar have already held follow-up meetings to plan the next steps for general semantics in India. Professor Kar and his Centre for Contemporary Theory will serve as the focal point for coordinating general semantics activities with universities throughout India and the U.S. as well.

'જનરલ સિમેન્ટિક્સ' અંગે રાષ્ટ્રીય કાર્યશાળા યોજાઈ

ભાસ્કર ન્યૂઝ. વડોદરા

સામાન્ય માણસ માટે નવો છતાં પણ રોજિંદી ઘટમાળમાં અત્યંત અગત્યનો ભાગ ભજવતો એવો વિષય 'જનરલ સિમેન્ટિક્સ', 'કોગ્નિટીવ લેન્ગવેજ સ્કિલ્સ ફોર ટ્વેન્ટી ફર્સ્ટ સેન્ચ્યુરી'ની બારમી રાષ્ટ્રીય કાર્યશાળામાં વિસ્તાર પૂર્વક ચર્ચાયો. આ કાર્યશાળામાં ઈન્સ્ટિટ્યુટ ઓફ જનરલ સિમેન્ટિક્સ, યુએસએના એક્ઝિક્યૂટિવ ડાયરેક્ટર સ્ટિવન સ્ટોકડેલ અને ઈન્સ્ટિ.ના

સમજતા તેવા કિસ્સા થતા મેં નોંધ્યા પણ જનરલ સિમેન્ટિક્સની મદદથી તે સમસ્યા ઉકેલાઈ ગઈ. સ્ટિવન સ્ટોકડેલે જણાવ્યું કે,' સંભાવનાઓને આધારે અર્ધજાગૃત મનમાં અપેક્ષાઓ ખડી થાય છે પણ ધારણાઓ વાસ્તવિકતા ન બને ત્યારે સંઘર્ષ થાય છે. આ પરિસ્થિતિથી દૂર રહેવામાં જનરલ સિમેન્ટિક્સ ચાવીરૂપ વિષય છે. જનરલાઈઝેશનથી દૂર રહેવામાં, પૂર્વગ્રહોથી બાબતોને નહીં મૂલવવામાં જનરલ

VIDESHI VIEWS†

ANDREA JOHNSON*

Wednesday, October 24, 2007. Delta flight 16 touches down at 9:15 p.m. After 25 hours of traveling, I feel like over-baked bread, crusty around the edges and none too appetizing. Yet, I've made it to Mumbai. After grabbing my luggage, I head for the exit and step into the glare of TV cameras. Photographers lean forward over the rails, and then settle back again when they realize it's just me frozen in the doorway: clearly not the famous person they awaited. Greeters wave signs at me, but none bear my name. Am I adrift in India? Nope. I missed it during my first dazed sweep: Welcome Ms. Andrea. The adventure begins.

For the next 18 days, I immersed myself in a culture with a 5,000-year-old history. The India I found was one of close quarters, fragrant food, colorful saris, intricate temples, blazing sun, and, of course, people interested in exploring general semantics — the reason I came to this amazing place.

How did I prepare for this experience? This enormous opportunity to present general semantics to so many people and the temerity of doing so within a new (for me) cultural context spurred me to intense research. I plowed through web sites about India, skimmed blogs, joined message boards, dug into books about Indian history and culture, and, yes, watched videos. Hooray for Bollywood! I pulled books from my shelves. I combed through Korzybski, Lee, Bois, Hayakawa, Johnson — both Wendell and Ken — and Read. I reviewed my notes from twenty-plus years of teaching gs at the university level, in workshops and in seminars. From another bookshelf, I grabbed texts on cross-cultural perspectives by Gudykunst, Samovar, Hall, Kim, and Koester. In the nights leading up to departure, intercultural theories and general semantics frameworks danced in my head.

Peeling the cultural onion. Using general semantics gave me ways to think about my experiences within this culture while planning presentations to teach

*Andrea Johnson lives in Shorewood, WI. Since retiring from her teaching position at Alverno College, she has contributed much of her time to the Institute as President of the Board. She wishes to thank the entire Parekh family for their contributions of time and wisdom during her visit to India.

† *Videshi* is Hindi for "foreigner."

general semantics itself. To help me evaluate my experiences in a new cultural context, I turned to intercultural communication theories, which also helped me to craft appropriate examples (and weed out inappropriate ones) when presenting general semantics to Indian audiences.

Edward Hall is generally acknowledged as having founded the field of intercultural communication by fusing theories and frameworks from various earlier disciplines. To pare it down to bare roots, I would say this field of study tries to understand and explain how people from different cultures perceive, behave and talk differently about their experiences. Hall stated that merely hypothesizing about and studying culture did not produce effective intercultural communication. One had to DO intercultural communication. I didn't have to look very hard to see the parallels between general semantics and intercultural communication theories.

Baggage and cultural awareness. Too bad the airlines don't have a "cultural baggage" inspector who could check to see if I packed too many cultural assumptions. After all, I know how the perceptual bias of my home culture limits my experience with and knowledge of another culture. I know I cannot exactly leave US cultural biases behind, but I can recognize that they traveled with me. In previous journeys, I've observed US travelers attempting to integrate themselves into a foreign culture. Generally they teeter between assuming the existence of similarities, which overlooks important differences, or assuming everything is different, which overlooks important similarities. At both extremes, they create over-generalized and not terribly useful maps of the territory. In India I tried to keep a close watch on my own tottering assumptions in order to move from generalization to specifics, or from examples to theory, without getting stuck at either end.

Diversity, thy name is India! Fourteen major languages and over 200 minor ones and 1600 dialects are spoken here; major religions of the world have a connection to India with Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism "born" here; people identify with, and are divided by, ethnicity, caste, politics, home state, etc. Sorting through these variables meant some trial and error while trying to achieve a level of effective interaction with the variety of people I met. Triandis (2006) identified four stages of cultural communication competence:

1. Unconscious incompetence — not aware there are problems in communicating
2. Conscious incompetence — the "oh-oh" stage, knowing something's not right but not knowing why or even how to mend the problem
3. Conscious competence — knowing something about the "other" culture, which improves communication approach, though still only with concerted effort
4. Unconscious competence — integrated, nearly effortless communication.

I hoped to move quickly through stages one and two and hover around stage 3 for most of my sojourn.

On the way from the airport to my hotel, I felt a jolt of the familiar. Mumbai feels like a lot of the major cities I've visited—Johannesburg, Paris, Beijing, Madrid, Tokyo, New York. People, people, and more people fill the streets, the little shops, and the outdoor restaurants. It resonates with that hum you only hear in cities that never sleep. "Similar," I reminded myself, "not same."

Even with mental reminders to keep gs perspectives in the forefront of my observations, sometimes my nervous system relaxed and I produced lazy abstractions. For example, on my first night, I gazed at the scene below my hotel window and "imposed" a familiarity. I saw "construction" tarps and concluded that the hotel was expanding. It wasn't until the third night that I had enough information to correct this map. I had been looking down at poverty and cobbled together homes of cardboard, plastic, and rags. As Ken Johnson often said, "there's no such thing as an immaculate perception."

What do you think of India? What did you expect? Upon learning this was my first visit, curious people pressed close and asked these questions earnestly and waited attentively for my answers. At first, I found it hard to formulate my responses. It was no exaggeration to say I felt charged with excitement from the moment I opened my eyes each day. However, I tried to curb expectations. I made a deliberate effort to keep my map in outline form and allow my experiences to sketch in specifics.

The enthusiastic response of participants to the formulations of general semantics was a pleasant surprise. And when we encountered disagreement or engaged in rigorous debate, it felt more like conversation than either side rejecting all the other said. I wondered about this and it occurred to me that every Indian I met spoke at least two languages and often more. Hindi is the official language, with English as the official "associate" language and the federal government accepts any language adopted by a state legislature as the official language of that state. For example, the "mother tongue" for those born in the state of Gujarat is Gujarati. Additionally, there are different written languages for Hindi, Bengali, Gujarati, Punjabi, etc. How does this translate (no pun) to an openness to general semantics? Each person in the workshops came already equipped with multiple names and multiple alphabets for the "same" thing. They live every day with an understanding that THE word is not THE thing. Moving to "the map is not the territory" didn't seem like much of a jump either.

Labels of primary potency. On one of our free days, we spent a quiet afternoon at the Gandhi Ashram in Ahmedabad, Gujarat. The stand of leafy trees, simple, functional housing units, along with the flowing Sabarmati River close by produced

a cool tranquility on a hot day. It was here in 1917 that Gandhi invited those from the untouchable caste to join in the work of the Ashram. Gandhi attempted to influence people's attitudes and behaviors toward the lowest caste by trying to erase historical distinctions. At Gandhi's insistence, they sat, ate, and worked with members of other castes. Those who objected to sharing close quarters with untouchables were asked to leave. Gandhi called members of the untouchable caste "Harijans" or Children of God. While he had great success with his philosophy of nonviolence, in general, attitudes toward Harijans remained negative and the new label had minor effect.

In *The Nature of Prejudice,* Gordon Allport tells us that some symbols come fully loaded with powerful stereotypes that "act like shrieking sirens deafening us to all finer discriminations we might perceive." He identified race, ethnicity, disability, and, to some extent, religion as "labels of primary potency." According to Allport, these abstractions stop thought; they represent language 'doing' our thinking for us, preventing us from abstracting other attributes and characteristics from individuals or groups.

The term "untouchables" qualifies as a label of primary potency and reflects other castes' attitudinal meaning as well. Over time, the stigma transferred from it to Gandhi's substitute, "Harijan," to such a degree that the latter has been replaced with yet another label, "Dalit." Officially, India's caste system no longer exists. Like most deep cultural constructs, however, the awareness of caste continues to influence some interactions with labels of primary potency. In 2007, the Center for Human Rights and Global Justice reported that 165 million Dalits are condemned to a lifetime of abuse simply because of their caste—even though there has been constitutional and legal protection for 60 years. Could a broader acquaintance with general semantics ameliorate this unfortunate labeling?

Finding common and uncommon ground. To prepare for our workshops, I practiced cultural awareness to help me relate to the participants, and to help me develop examples they could relate to — I read local newspapers and watched TV shows and music videos. This made it easier to find ways to explain and clarify gs with political and social examples that came straight from the participants' daily lives. I watched the endless interviewing and advertising for the latest Bollywood films until I could converse enthusiastically about the stars and the story lines while making gs connections. Confusing levels of abstraction could be seen in the tantalizing almost-kiss, the gleeful running and chasing of inferences (Will she? Does he?), that would end up in a rousing song and dance number. What began as "research" became…well, enjoyment. Not only did I find myself humming popular tunes, I started to sing little snatches of the songs — a rather interesting phenomenon because the words were in Hindi.

I remember an incident where I felt certain the participants and I shared common ground, when, in fact, we did not. In *Beyond Culture,* Hall wrote about the importance of communication contexts within cultures and categorized differences in communication styles. He described "low context" cultures as ones where linear logic prevails, facts take precedence over intuition, questions help determine meanings, and people are action-oriented and individualistic. Information is explicit and consciously organized—"in plain sight." "High context" cultures value group cohesiveness and are relationship oriented. Meanings are embedded in situations where nonverbal behaviors and shared practices bring a high degree of certainty to inferences. Information is implicit with patterns and internalized context—"below the waterline." Hall noted that these contexts are on a continuum and that differences can be found within any culture. Hall labeled the US as low context and India as high context. I knew this. And I also knew that many stage 1 and stage 2 errors happen when people from low and high context cultures interact, especially when conditioned behaviors and evaluations are transferred to a new situation without delaying reactions.

At nearly every presentation, I talked about inferences and facts and the importance of differentiating between the two—a critical thinking skill. I gave the participants a variation of the "Uncritical Inference Test" where they read a story about a person named AJ Jones and then marked statements about the story "true" or "false" based upon what they could verify in the story or "?" if the statement could not be verified. Two types of statements almost always tripped up the India groups.

In most cases, a statement with a gender specific pronoun (he) was usually marked as "true" even though the character's name does not specify a gender. In the 300+ people who took this "test" in India, only a handful scored such statements correctly—and they were all women. (I find similar results from US inference test-takers.) During one discussion, several participants noted the high probability that Jones was male. I stated that probabilities are not facts. When a male participant said, "It's really not important if Jones is referred to as 'he' or not," one of the women replied, "to some it's of great importance."

The other problematic statement referred to an incident in a story where a woman didn't acknowledge a greeting by Jones. The story describes the woman as "sitting at a desk where the desk nameplate said *Nayana*." Participants nearly always marked as true the statement "*Nayana did not acknowledge Jones's greeting.*"

As we scored the test, I pointed out that, since someone else could have sat down at *Nayana's* desk, the statement cannot be verified by the story and should be marked an inference. To my great surprise, many people continued to insist that the

statement was true. To clarify my reasoning, I asked, "Haven't you ever sat down at someone else's desk? I know I have." The resounding response: "That would *never* happen in India." While the "never" part could be debated, I could not debate their assertion. "Everyone knows not to do this" is a valid claim for a high context culture where rules are implicit and rarely, if ever, broken. In an individualistic, low context society like the US, plopping down at someone else's desk is not terribly unusual, so US participants immediately recognize the possible ambiguity of the statement. I wrote the inference test with confidence and a "sure" eye for what constitutes fact and inference. Dang, I got caught by my own Uncritical Inference test.

When low context culture moves to a higher context. David Matsumoto has said that even people who think they have no culture have a culture; it is just the culture to believe they have no culture. After working closely for four years as Executive Director and Board President, Steve and I have developed many characteristics of a high context culture. We have learned to "read" each other so that information does not need to be made explicit—understanding can be obtained implicitly from our shared history. This served us well in India. For example, during intense question and answer sessions, we didn't need to determine who would answer what. Instead, like a skillful doubles tennis team, we covered the court and did our best to avoid the net.

One critical incident where meanings broke down resulted, as often happens, from confusing levels of abstraction. At a small gathering, we were offered Indian sweets to enjoy and served glasses of water. I recall feeling deep thirst, but did not want to sound like a prissy American by asking for bottled water. From across the room, Steve and I made meaningful eye contact and our eyebrows inquired of the other—do you think it's bottled? I lowered my eyes, signaling clearly, (I thought), "better not drink it." Unfortunately the nonverbal message Steve received was not the one I sent. He drank, while I did not. We each suffered the consequences of our abstractions.

Horizon of experience. The horizon of experience is the range of vision that can be seen from a particular vantage point. In general semantics, we say that's a map of a territory. If a viewer, or map-maker, believes "the horizon constitutes a limitless 'all,'" we describe that as an intensional orientation, a failure to understand the abstracting process. When the horizon of experience from one's home culture is used as a "fair and valid" evaluation of a new culture, intercultural theorists call that *ethnocentrism.*

Ethnocentric thinking contributes to negative assumptions about a culture as a traveler views experiences through a two-valued lens: the way we do it and *the other way*. Often, *the other* suffers from biased evaluations. People from the US may talk about countries where they drive on "the wrong side" of the road, or note that the Arab language is written "backwards." I knew that India would present

many challenges and unfortunate opportunities for negative stereotyping. I recall an email from an acquaintance who indicated no desire to visit India because "I feel uncomfortable seeing people living on the streets anywhere." I can understand the sentiment, but I disagree with the implication that India consists only of things to make one uncomfortable.

In my research about India, I didn't shy away from delving into their social problems. I hoped to stave off ethnocentric evaluations or at least bring them to my awareness. During my stay, I saw homeless people sleeping on sidewalks and I sensed beggars' hands tugging on my clothes and I had to gulp down the sorrow I felt.

I had internal conversations where I heard the ethnocentric me sputter, "Why can't the government _____?" "They need to improve, fix, solve _____." "What's with all the garbage on the street?" By observing my reactions — upset, confused — I could begin to evaluate them and determine whether they were appropriate for the new situations. It's easy to move to false assumptions based on limited experience and knowledge. We don't understand that we don't understand. My horizon of experience didn't reliably produce accurate evaluations in a world of a billion people and limited resources.

My hosts answered questions and provided information about the complexity of problems that went far beyond what I could merely observe. I also learned about the actions being taken and progress already made, and the different levels of intervention and education that have greatly changed lives for many Indians. This is not a static country — it pulsates and hurts and grows and changes. One person patiently reminded me, "You know we've only been a democracy for 60 years." I think I rightly interpreted this as "give us a break!".

My horizon expanded. By the end of the trip, I had learned to save my cold cheese toast leftovers and dump them on the ground…for the cows to eat, and consider it sharing rather than littering.

Summarizing, but not "all." In the end, I felt a little like Dorothy, having ventured into and then out of the Technicolor world of India, and when I returned to the gray Midwestern winter, I could only wonder… where were the bright colors and soft silks and the white hot days? I came home with taste buds so heightened that they practically wept when I took my first bite of a veggie burger. Fortunately, my local co-op provides tasty Indian food to satisfy my newly fire-tempered tongue.

In this new century of instantaneous communication, we can look forward to maintaining and nourishing the connections we made with the many individuals we had the great fortune to meet during our visit. While different cultures result in different worldviews, we can use general semantics to find the intersections and use them to form the framework for building understanding and cooperation. *Namaste.*

Workshop Materials

Twelfth National Workshop

Cognitive Language Skills for the 21st Century

3-5 November 2007

Venue

Centre for Contemporary Theory, Baroda

FORUM ON CONTEMPORARY THEORY
Centre for Contemporary Theory
301-302, Shiv Shakti Complex
84 Sampatrao Colony
R.C. Dutt Road, Baroda-390007
Tel: (0265) 6622512
e-mail: pck@satyam.net.in, librarycct@yahoo.co.in
Website: www.fctworld.org

Introduction

The twelfth national workshop of the Forum on Contemporary Theory will be held in Baroda during 3-5 November 2007. The general theme of the Workshop is general semantics, a field of study that came into prominence in the writings of the Polish philosopher Alfred Korzybski in the 1930s. The Workshop is supported by a grant from Balvantbhai K. Parekh of Trivenikalyan Foundation, Mumbai.

Workshop Outline

The system of language evaluation known as general semantics was first proposed by Alfred Korzybski in his landmark 1933 book, *Science and Sanity*. Korzybski theorized that human progress, measured by advances in the sciences, engineering, technology, etc., has resulted due to the application of what we know as a scientific method or process of problem-solving. Conversely, he diagnosed that our lack of progress on a sociological level, measured by ongoing wars, rivalries, personal disputes, etc., has resulted in large part due to our not applying a scientific methodology to our studies of language and human affairs. As language serves as the basis for human communication and negotiation of conflicts, it follows that if our understanding of language is incomplete or flawed, our abilities to solve problems through language, on personal and societal levels, will also be flawed. Therefore in *Science and Sanity*, Korzybski proposed that as we apply the methodologies of a scientific orientation toward the study of our daily language and communication habits, we may begin to increase the levels of individual and societal *sanity*.

General semantics encompasses an interdisciplinary approach to the study of language as a vital aspect of human behavior. General semantics is based on the premise that language does not exist apart from the human beings who create, use, and modify that language. A proper evaluation of language, and the effects of language, must not exclude the individuals engaged in using that language. Therefore, the general semantics methodology is concerned with these aspects of human behavior:

1) Beginning with our perceptions of the world in which we live;
2) Our internal, nervous system constructions in which our sensory perceptions are transformed into sensory experiences or cognitive awareness;
3) Our evaluations of our constructed experiences, by which we determine significance, purpose, and 'meaning';
4) And then our communication of those evaluations through language, symbols, pictures, music, etc.

So one can say that general semantics deals with the processes involved in how we ***perceive, construct, evaluate, and communicate our life experiences.***

The expected outcomes for Participants who engage in the Workshop include:

- How to apply a scientific orientation to everyday problem-solving, including those problems that are rooted in language.
- How to appreciate the diversities inherent in the different perspectives of individuals as *individuals*, rather than as members of a *class* (based on race, religion, gender, etc.).
- How to recognize the "leading indicators" of biases, prejudices, and stereotypes based on hidden assumptions and premises in our language thinking.
- How to change language habits to more accurately apply our current knowledge about ourselves and our world; in other words, how to better integrate our *verbal* world with our *non-verbal (sensory)* world.
- How to recognize and correct unproductive language habits and behaviors that prevent us from living "at the height of the times."
- How to recognize and resist the manipulative language of propaganda, advertising, public relations spin, and other attempts to persuade or control how we as individuals, and societies, think and behave.
- The methods of the workshop will include lecture, discussion, demonstrations and exercises, and video viewings.

Organizational Details

The Workshop will be conducted by a team of experts on general semantics, who are specially invited from the United States. Study material will be made available to the participants in advance. Each participant is expected to make a presentation during the Workshop based upon the study material provided. Sessions will be mostly interactive between the faculty and participants.

Participation Criteria

Participation in the program is mainly open to graduate students and teachers from any discipline from Indian universities as well as to those outside the university set-up interested in the subject of general semantics and allied areas. Maximum number of participants to be selected is 40.

Registration Fee

Each participant is required to pay a registration fee of Rs. 600/ (Rupees six hundred only) to the Forum on Contemporary Theory through a bank draft payable at Baroda. The fee will take care of the cost of reading material, lunch during the workshop and tea. The participants have to make their own travel arrangements. Accommodation could be arranged in the M. S. University guest house on request.

Deadline for Application

The last date for receiving application for participation is: **August 20**. The application may be sent to the Director, Centre for Contemporary Theory, Baroda. Selection for participation will be made by **August 30**. Selected candidates are required to send the bank draft favoring Forum on Contemporary Theory by **September 20**. Course material will be mailed only after receiving the registration fee. The fee is non-refundable.

Faculty

The following specialists comprise the core faculty. They will be assisted by some guest lecturers to be invited from neighboring universities.

a) **Andrea J. Johnson**. She is President, Board of Trustees, Institute of General Semantics, Fort Worth, Texas, USA. She holds a Masters Degree in Communications from the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee. She was Professor of Professional Communications at Alverno College, Milwaukee during 1986-2005. A Consultant for Communications Training and general semantics, she has taught general semantics courses at Alverno College, IGS Seminars and Corporate Workshops. She has contributed articles to the journal *ETC: A Review of General Semantics*. She is fluent in French.

b) **Steven E. Stockdale**. He is Executive Director, Institute of General Semantics, Fort Worth, Texas, USA. He has studied Science at United States Air Force Academy, Colorado Springs, and Linguistics. He was a Trustee of the Institute of General Semantics during 1996-2003. He was an Adjunct Instructor in general semantics for the Schieffer School of Journalism, TCU University (Fort Worth, Texas) and has been teaching general semantics courses at the Institute of General Semantics seminars since 1996. He was invited speaker

and lecturer on general semantics to over 20 universities, organizations, and conferences. He is a frequent contributor to the journal *ETC: A Review of General Semantics.*

Application Format

The following format should be used for sending applications for participation in the Workshop.

Name
Address (including telephone number and email ID)
Institutional Affiliation
Date of Birth
Department
Teaching Experience (including the number of years only)
Academic Qualifications
Areas of Research and Teaching
Publication, if any
Specific Research Topic, if any
Whether Registered for a Research Degree?
A Brief Statement of about 150 words about what you expect from the workshop
Names and Addresses of Two Referees Signature
Date

Address for Correspondence

Prafulla C. Kar
Director, Centre for Contemporary Theory 301-02, Shiv Shakti Complex,
84 Sampatrao Colony
R. C. Dutt Road
Baroda 390007
Tel: 0265-6622512, 2338067
Email: pck@satyam.net.in; librarycct@yahoo.co.in

To: Head of the Department

Please circulate this leaflet among the teachers, research scholars and students of your Department. Thanks for your cooperation.

*UNCRITICAL INFERENCE TEST **

ANDREA JOHNSON

This test tries to show how anyone may jump to conclusions, by unconsciously making inferences based on the facts given. It will also test the ability to evaluate accurately.

Read the story carefully. Consider the information factual.

Next, read the statements and circle your answers.
"T" means that given the information in the story, the statement is definitely true.
"F" means that given the information in the story, the statement is definitely false.
"?" means that the statement may be true or may be false, but given the information in the story you cannot be definitely certain.

You may re-read the story as often as you like, but don't change your answers once you have marked a statement.

It was the grand opening for Mumbai-Mayo Hospital when AJ Jones entered the administration office. Jones walked from desk to desk pleasantly greeting the new employees. One person sat at her desk with her back turned to Jones. She didn't acknowledge the greeting; in fact she kept her eyes cast downward. Jones looked at her desk nameplate, which said "Nayana," frowned and walked briskly out of the office.

1. Jones is the new hospital administrator.	T	F	?
2. Nayana doesn't speak English.	T	F	?
3. The hospital is linked to the Mayo Clinic in the United States.	T	F	?
4. Jones greeted new employees as he walked from desk to desk.	T	F	?
5. AJ Jones entered the administrator's office.	T	F	?
6. It was the grand opening for Mumbai-Mayo Hospital.	T	F	?
7. Nayana hates Americans.	T	F	?
8. Nayana is shy and a little hard of hearing.	T	F	?
9. Nayana did not acknowledge Jones's greeting.	T	F	?
10. Jones made an inference about the woman who did not acknowledge his greeting.	T	F	?

**William V. Haney's* Uncritical Inference Test was developed as part of his doctoral dissertation in 1953 and has been adapted by educators, management consultants, the U.S. Navy and others as a way to sharpen critical thinking skills. Haney was a member of the Institute of General Semantics.

(Some) BASIC UNDERSTANDINGS OF GENERAL SEMANTICS

STEVE STOCKDALE

Time-binding

- Only humans have demonstrated the capability to build on the knowledge of prior generations. Alfred Korzybski referred to this capability as *time-binding*.
- Language serves as the principle tool that facilitates time-binding.
- Time-binding forms the basis for an ethical standard by which to evaluate human behavior.
- Acknowledging our time-binding inheritance dispels the 'self-made' notion and encourages us to 'time-bind' for the benefit of those who follow.

Scientific Approach

- Our ability to time-bind is most evident when we apply a scientific approach, method or attitude in our evaluations and judgments.
- A scientific approach involves the process of continually testing assumptions and beliefs, gathering as many facts and as much data as possible, revising assumptions and beliefs as appropriate, and holding conclusions and judgments tentatively.
- Hidden, or unstated assumptions guide our behavior to some degree; therefore we ought to make a special effort to become more aware of them.
- We live in a process-oriented universe in which everything changes all the time. The changes may be readily apparent to us, or microscopic, or even sub-microscopic. There's always more than we can sense or experience.

Observe → Hypothesize → Test → Revise, *etc.*

Abstracting and Evaluating ("Behavior Awareness")

- As human organisms, we have limits as to what we can experience through our senses. Given these limitations, we can never experience 'all' of what's 'out there' to experience. We 'abstract' only a portion of what's 'out there.'
- Our awareness of 'what goes on' outside of our skin, is not 'what is going on;' our awareness of our experience is not the silent, first-order, neurological experience.

- Given our ever-changing environment (which includes ourselves, and our awareness of ourselves), we never experience the 'same' person, event, situation, 'thing,' experience, etc., more than once.
- To the degree that our reactions and responses to all forms of stimuli are automatic, or conditioned, we copy animals, like Pavlov's dog. To the degree that our reactions and responses are more controlled, delayed, or conditional to the given situation, we exhibit our uniquely-human capabilities.
- We each experience 'what's out there' uniquely, according to our individual sensory capabilities, integrating our past experiences and expectations. We ought to maintain an attitude of 'to-me-ness' in our evaluations of our own behavior, as well as in our evaluations of others' behavior.

What Happens
≠ What I Experience
≠ What I Report
≠ What I Infer, Believe, Assume, or the Meanings I Generate

Perceive — Construct — Evaluate — Communicate

Verbal Awareness

- We can think of language as the unique capability that allows humans to 'time-bind,' or learn, from generation to generation, as well as within generations.
- However, language has evolved with structural flaws in that much of the language we use does not properly reflect the structure of the world we experience 'out there.'
- Among the mistakes we perhaps unknowingly commit:
    - confusing the word itself with what the word stands for;
    - acting as if the meaning of the words we use is contained solely in the word, without considering the context and the individuals;
    - confusing facts with our inferences, assumptions, beliefs, etc.;
    - not accounting for the many "shades of gray," simplistically looking at things as if they were black or white, right or wrong, good or bad, etc.;
    - using language to 'separate' that which in the actual world cannot be separated, such as *space* from *time*, *mind* from *body*, *thinking* from *feeling*.
- Revising our language habits by using the *extensional devices* will help us become more aware and more deliberate in our everyday talking and listening: *indexing, dating, quotes, hyphen, etc., E-Prime, and English Minus Absolutisms (EMA).*

Sensory Awareness

- We 'experience' our daily living on the silent, non-verbal levels; in other words, on a physiological-neurological level different from our verbal awareness.
- Our ability to experience the world is relative, unique to our own individual sensing capabilities.
- Our language habits can affect our physiological behavior; we can allow what we see, hear, say, etc., to affect our blood pressure, pulse, rate of breathing, etc.
- As we become more aware of our own non-verbal behaviors, we can practice techniques to achieve greater degrees of relaxation, less stress, greater sense of our environment, etc.

THE BRIDGE AT NEVERWAS
Closing Remarks at Baroda

Steve Stockdale

Once upon a time there was a beautiful land known as Neverwas. The people who settled in Neverwas loved it, for it provided everything they needed to live and prosper. There were fertile fields for farming, mountains for mining and timber, and a broad river with crystal clear water that ran through the land. To the west, on the other side of the mountains, a natural harbor invited access to the vast ocean. To the east, as far as anyone could see, a great golden plain extended into the rising sun.

The Neverwas-ites felt truly blessed, except for one flaw in their near-paradise. The mighty river, which in many ways represented the life force of the people and the land, divided Neverwas into two distinct lands: the mountains with the mines and timber sat west of the river, with the ocean still further west; the great fertile farmland and endless plains lay to the east of the river. The people of Neverwas could only cross the broad river twice a year when the river flow slowed enough to allow them to guide their flat-bottomed barges with long poles.

Over the years, the people of Neverwas adapted to the challenges resulting from the river divide. The people on the east side of the river learned to farm and irrigate the vast fields. They grew a healthy variety of food crops, and also cotton for making clothes. On their side of the river, they built great mills powered by the river flow and processed their grains into flour and meal. The people on the east side became experts in growing and processing the crops that their fertile fields produced.

The people on the west side of the river learned to mine the mountain ore and forge metal tools and utensils. The trees from the mountain forests provided plentiful wood for building shelters and eventually boats. They learned how to harness the power of the river to mill the lumber. They became expert builders and designers, making use of their never-ending supply of timber and ore to engineer new tools, devices, and structures. Some of the westsiders became sailors, and over the years they learned to venture out well beyond the Neverwas harbor.

And twice a year, every year, the people on both sides of the river devoted

themselves to crossing the river and exchanging food, cloth, timber, tools, utensils — all the goods that had to be traded in order for people on both sides of the river to live and prosper.

Over the years, all the people in Neverwas spent their nights gazing into the brilliant sky above. The Neverwas-ites on the east side observed the changing shapes and patterns of the moon and stars. Over the years, they noticed how the landscape of the sky was arranged when certain events occurred in their land. When they experienced great joy upon the births of new babies, they looked to the sky; when their crop harvests were bountiful, when the river brought them many fish, whenever good fortune embraced them. But they also looked to the sky when they experienced great suffering during plagues, droughts, floods, and other tragedies. Over the years, they began to see connections between what occurred in the sky and what resulted on the land. They wove wonderful stories about the creatures and characters they saw in the sky, and passed these stories down from generation to generation.

Like their neighbors to the east, the people who lived west of the river developed a fascination with the sky. Over the years, they too carefully watched the movement of the moon and stars. They learned how to predict when certain formations would appear, and where in the sky they would appear. As their sailors began to sail farther away from Neverwas, they observed that the position of the sky landscapes changed. Over the years, they charted the sky formations, noting the dates, times, and locations of the moon and the brightest stars. They used their knowledge of mathematics to calculate and predict their location based on the position of the moon and stars. They eventually learned how to navigate the vast ocean by using the sky landscape to guide them.

Over the years, the council leaders of Neverwas met together to talk about how they could make life better for people on both sides of the river. Every year, the leaders from both sides discussed how wonderful it would be if they could cross the river throughout the year, rather than just twice a year using the pole-driven flat-bottomed barges. Every year, the leaders would speculate how wonderful it would be if there was a bridge at Neverwas. But the people on the east side of the river knew nothing about designing or building bridges, and the people on the west side of the river, including their best engineers, had no idea how they could build a bridge that would span the broad expanse of the river.

One year, the west side sailors returned from a long trip across the ocean with exciting news for the engineers. They had visited a faraway land and observed the largest and stoutest bridge they had ever seen! This great bridge spanned a river even broader than the Neverwas river, according to the sailors. The engineers were skeptical. How was that possible? They had to see it for themselves. They

pooled their resources and selected their three most trusted engineers to sail on the next boat out to see this great bridge.

Months later, the boat carrying the engineers returned to Neverwas. The engineers literally sprang from the boat deck onto the dock, so eager were they to get started on their own bridge. For they had indeed seen the great foreign bridge! It did exist, and the engineers brought back detailed sketches of the bridge's ingenious design. The engineers and the mathematicians immediately set about reproducing the structural calculations to design a bridge for the river at Neverwas.

Word spread quickly on both sides of the river about the prospects for the long-awaited bridge. It was finally going to happen! The farmers and the mill operators on the east side of the river started looking for new land to acquire to grow more crops and mill more grain as they anticipated great riches from increased trade to the west side and beyond. The loggers and the builders on the west side began stockpiling building materials as they anticipated a great building boom on the east side, thanks to the easy transport the bridge would bring.

For one long year, everyone in Neverwas waited for the engineers to finish the designs for the bridge. The people on both sides of the river elected representatives to a new council, specially formed to oversee the bridge project. On the day that the new council was briefed on the project plans, there were great celebrations all across the land.

But the celebrations were brief. For the engineers from the west side had devised a plan for the bridge that the eastside council could not accept. The problem was not in the design or the structure or the cost of the bridge, but its location.

The plans specified that the bridge was to be built at the place where the river was narrowest and straightest. The westside engineer explained that this was the only feasible place where the bridge could be built for three reasons:

1. As the location where the river was most narrow, there was more margin for error that the supporting structures on each side of the river could bear the weight of the wide span.
2. As the location where the river ran most straight, there was less risk to the supporting structures due to erosion or flood.
3. Due to the mountains on the west side of the river, the chosen location was the only place where there was adequate access to build a roadway that could connect to the bridge on the west side.

But the leader of the eastside council strongly objected to this location. It was simply not possible to build the bridge at this spot, he exclaimed, for three reasons:

1. Three hundred years before, there had been a great drought on the east side of the river. The great drought was broken only after the eastsiders

had gathered at this very spot to prayerfully appeal to the stars above. Every year since, the eastsiders held a festival to celebrate and to appeal to the stars that there would never again be such a devastating drought. The bridge simply could not be built on this sacred site.

2. Their best and most revered sky readers had revealed that the stars in the heavens favored a site three miles up river, near a hill on which the eastsiders had always gathered to gaze up at the night sky.
3. The eastside mill operators and farmers also supported the same site three miles up river, where the river happened to run the fastest and widest. But it also happened that three large mills were already planned to be built there, and the site bordered the farms of the two wealthiest and most powerful farmers in Neverwas.

For five long years, the Neverwas westsiders and eastsiders argued about where the bridge might be built. For every location the westside engineers considered workable, the eastsiders objected. For every location offered by the eastsiders, the engineers' calculations showed it to be unworkable.

And so it happened that one spring, there was an abundance of rain and the river swelled and was in danger of flooding both sides of Neverwas. The eastsiders gathered on their sacred spot, now threatened by the rapidly rising water, at the very spot the bridge had been proposed. They prayed and appealed to the stars in the heavens for the rains to stop.

Despite their appeals and prayers, the storms grew even stronger. The river rose rapidly, flooding the farmers' fields to the east. There were terrible lightning strikes over the mountains, causing devastating fires to the timber structures in the villages. Before the rains eventually doused the fires, many of the buildings on the west side burned to the ground.

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One of the buildings that burned was where all of the plans, sketches, and designs for the bridge were stored.

And that is the story of how the bridge at Neverwas never was built.

[Steve presented "The Bridge at Neverwas" as his closing remarks for the Baroda Workshop. Devkumar Trivedi attended and offers his impressions of the story:

The Bridge at Neverwas, a parable of panoramic perception written by Steve, seemed like a spectacular gate of a manor which opens the path to several doors in the grand structure. This story should be in the textbooks for the final year of every school. While the nervous system is designed for our survival, inability or disinclination to see further around the mind's corner will hasten extinction. In the age when man has traversed cislunar landscapes, if senses are so sacralized as to treat them infallible, if perceptual prisons are not broken, if conceptual cages are not opened, if a flight on the wings of values is not undertaken, civilization will accelerate to ashes and dust.

In the chapel of freedom, unbiased debate and open discussion are the secular deities. Conflict of interest between what I as an individual want, and what we as a community — mankind — need, can be resolved by a mind trained to "see ourselves as others see us," and also to see ourselves what others see. Impressionable minds from kindergarten stage need not be colonised by the doctrines of ideology, theology, macho He-ology, or self centred Me-ology.

The story impacted with such a constructive implosion that all the dimensions of my understanding deepened, widened and gained elevation. Building bridges to exchange resources enriches riparian habitations. And where civilizations have moved far away or declined, new bridges have to be built on new locations. This effect was further intensified by the heightened vocabulary of the beautiful lines of the song by George Harrison, in which he tells us that the "space between us all" doesn't really constitute a space but rather a connection…a bridge. He reminds us:

When you see beyond yourself then you may find that we are all one,
And life flows on within you and without you.

Metaphorically, building bridges between maps and territories, between the abstract and the immediate, and between values of love and compassion, is the peremptory need of the century. While genes over the globe have interfused, celibate memes of faith have clashed in crusades. Bridges of awake communication (i.e. awakened, inter alia, by general semantics) will help the journey from self-righteous narcissism, over to the destination of understanding, justice, and evolution.]

A NEW SORT OF MAN:
BALVANT K. PAREKH

STEVE STOCKDALE

Irving J. Lee related a conversation he had with Alfred Korzybski in which Lee asked, "Now, Alfred, you have been thinking about this stuff for a very long time. Can you tell me, in a nutshell, what are you trying to do? What is the objective of all this reading and studying and talking and sweating that you go through day after day, year after year? What are you after?"

Korzybski replied to Lee, "Irving, we are trying to produce *a new sort of man*." (1)

Lee goes on to describe how Korzybski attempted to describe this *new sort of man* in the pages of *Science and Sanity*. During the course of a speech he gave in 1951, Lee outlined a profile of this *new sort of man* that included traits and characteristics such as:

- Competence, not merely in terms of knowledge, but in the application of his knowledge.
- Curiosity about the world and the people around him.
- Productive and efficient memory in terms of remembering the important and the significant, but forgetting the unpleasant, the petty, and the trivial.
- Highly discriminating awareness of differences, nuances, and subtleties; he would never "suffer from the blindness that obliterates uniqueness."
- Integrative personality in a holistic sense; he would know and do, diagnose and prescribe, think and feel and act. He will embody both "rugged individualism" and cooperative altruism.
- Unapologetic sincerity in his beliefs, behaviors, and attitudes toward those things he deemed to be relevant and significant, with an equal ability to disassociate himself from that which he determined to be unimportant and trifling.
- Constant awareness that his beliefs, no matter how sincere or deeply-held, are *beliefs* and therefore not final *Truth* or *Knowledge*; he would not shirk from exploring what lies beyond his beliefs.
- Patience in great reserves.

- Sociability and friendliness without pretention.
- Clarity and precision in his speaking, with confidence and without apology.
- Persistence and perseverance in his endeavors, while taking care to pick his battles carefully and admitting, but 'dating,' his setbacks and defeats.
- "Ruthless realism" to the maximum degree possible.
- Cooperation, inventiveness, or steadfast determination, depending on the circumstances but always acting toward resolution and accomplishment.
- Alertness to "the possibilities and potentialities of the human being," while still recognizing the practical limitations of humanness: "*Limitation of aims is the mother of wisdom and the secret of achievement*," (Goethe) and "*Knowledge of the possible is the beginning of happiness.*" (Santayana)

In the person of Mr. Balvant K. Parekh, Lee and Korzybski would surely have found a fellow traveler of this *new sort*. To support this evaluation, to publicly recognize his contributions as Time-Binder, and to illustrate the trans-cultural applicability of Korzybski's system of extensional orientation (i.e., *general semantics*), we are pleased to present portraits of Mr. Parekh sketched in two parts.

The first part, "Felicitations" (or *celebrations of an accomplishment*) includes four excerpts from a book of well-wishes presented to Mr. Parekh on the occasion of his 75th birthday in 1999. These four short and very personal comments about Mr. Parekh, sampled from over one hundred published, portray representational images of him by his daughter, granddaughter, personal assistant, and recipient of his philanthropy.

The second part, "Selections from *Gamta no kariye Gulal*," offers more impressionistic insights about Mr. Parekh. These statements, quotes, and articles from his own compilations of material published in his own journal, beginning in 2003, reveal much about the interests, passions, and character of this *new sort of man*. The title of the journal, *Gamta no kariye Gulal*, translates into English as, "If you get what you like, do not keep it; rather, share it."

I hope that as you learn more about this *new sort of man*, you might benefit from his *new sort of time-binding*.

FELICITATIONS

Excerpts from *Behind the Curtain (NEPATHYE): Shri Balavant Parekh Felicitation Volume*, First Gujurati Edition March 1999, English Edition March 2005. To celebrate the occasion of Mr. Parekh's 75th birthday.

MY FATHER: Friend and Confidant

Kalpana Parekh

As family, friends and well-wishers join together to felicitate the patriarch of the Parekh family, I would like to share with you a few thoughts about this wonderful and multifaceted personality. I know I will find it difficult to find the words to convey my feelings for my father, but I will try.

My mother always told me that I was quite like my father. I know my father and I both have a short temper, but I would have been happier to inherit his other qualities — his kindness, his broadmindedness, and his amazing ability to face difficulties without breaking down.

One of my earliest memories of my father is of the difficult days when he was trying to set up Pidilite Industries. However preoccupied he was, he never failed to make his children feel special. He always made it a point to bring us something special, however small, when he came home from work. He never allowed his tiredness or anxiety to intrude into his time with us.

Another quality that I admire in my father is his extremely modern outlook. Growing up as a product of the forties, he showed none of the conservatism that marked most of his contemporaries. Being his daughter, I benefited by this trait. He was willing — rather eager — to send me to the US for further studies way back in 1973 for a year that would play a major role in my life. It was with this very same attitude of broadmindedness that he encouraged me to make my own decisions, whether in regard to my business or in my choice of a husband, for which I am truly grateful.

But above all else, there is one quality that sets my father apart from most people. And that is his desire to constantly improve himself and evolve into a better person. The major change I find in him today is he is genuinely able to accept people as they

are, with their mixed bag of good and bad qualities. To me that is admirable indeed and something that I wish I could emulate.

My father has held my hand through the difficult growing-up years, always offering his support during my times of need. So today, even though I have children of my own, I know I can always count on one person whenever I need advice or solace – the person I am proud to call *KAKA*.

AN ODE TO MY NANAJI

Maithili Parekh

He's 75, doesn't wear glasses, but looks closely at life around him. His face is quiet and sturdy, one of experience and willpower.

He's an avid reader, especially when it comes to Sigmund Freud and international politics — anyone from Fidel Castro to Madeline Albright.

He is Mr. B.K. Parekh, one of the most respected members of the community. But to me he is plain and simple *Nanaji*, my grandfather.

Nanaji has a way of explaining seemingly most complicated matters in the simplest of ways. He manages to put things into perspective. On our recent trip to Nepal I was complaining to him that I would never experience what a labourer's child goes through simply because I was born into a well-off family, and never went through the terrible difficulties of growing up because I had a privileged background. But with a simple anecdote he explained his point to me: He said life is like a game of cards, what you get is not a matter of choice but how you play those cards and what you make of them decides whether you will win or lose. Be it a simple game of "bukharo" or an important business matter, Nanaji will never come up with an answer without giving it enough thought. (Ask Nani and she'll tell you he thinks too much!)

What is so special about Nanaji is that he doesn't command respect which most people in power today do. He earns it, be it the Mafatlal house office staff, members of the Gujarati community, or simply the Pidilite agents who have come to the Nepal airport to receive us.

What is truly outstanding is his openness to views and criticism (though he can be stubborn very often!). A broad-minded man, he sent my mother to study abroad which in those days came as quite a shock to a lot of people — a 21-year old girl ought to be married and not sent abroad to study! Only boys were meant to do this. He never distinguished between daughter and son, though Indian society did. A couple of months ago, while my mother was still apprehensive about sending me abroad to study at 18, Nanaji was positive that such an experience was sure to enrich my life.

When I stop to think of the influence that Nanaji has had on my life, I wonder if I can find enough or adequate words. From my earliest years, teachers and parents have always preached "good values" and "morals" telling me what to stand for either in their own words or in the words of famous men and women. *Courage of conviction, truth, self-sacrifice, struggle for success* … but Nanaji has spelled none of these words to me. His silent ways have taught me much more. He's taught me to be ambitious and motivated, honest and giving, to learn and be open-minded. In his quiet way he's allowed me to be unconventional, bold and brave. It is from him that I have learned to strive to be a better human being. Thank you, Nanaji!

MR. B.K.PAREKH: The Perfect Boss

Sajini Malani

Mr. BKP is 75 now in 1999. How absolutely wonderful! It takes me back to 1975 when he was 51 years old and I joined him to be his personal assistant. All kinds of memories cross my mind as he was then sensitive, considerate, volatile, an expert in excise matters, interested in Shakespeare, Western music, art, psychology and psychoanalysis, and of course not forgetting his roots in Gujarati literature and music.

We worked harmoniously together. I am glad he soon realized that I was not there just to do the routine work. He appreciated and encouraged my tendencies for varied interests. I grew bold when I realized that he had a soft spot for me and exploited it, of course! The first project that I presented to him was that peons be given terrycot uniforms and sandals, which I argued was good for the image of the Group. He appreciated the inhibitions of junior staff in approaching him with their problems even though he comforted them by saying that anybody could walk into his chambers. When this proved impractical for more reasons than one, he appointed me in charge of the grievance cell to receive the complaints of the staff and pass them on to him for fair appraisal. He defended my partisan stand and expressed that I had no personal interest in these matters and I was just requesting consideration for others! Incredibly laudable on his part — a born leader around whom the whole management and staff riveted.

After a few years as a full-timer, I decided to go part-time. Mr. BKP was non-plussed to introduce this new concept as he feared this might trigger off requests from other married women for the same consideration. I must admit it took some convincing on my part for him to agree to this new idea. Fortunately for me he did. And I knew he would, as he was never afraid of testing out new ideas. With this kind of an arrangement I stayed on for a total of 12 memorable years. A liberal at

heart who felt that women had been exploited, he was happy to be supportive to a deserving candidate – lucky for me!

He was very particular about his diet and refrained from eating those detectable mithais which I absolutely loved. So whenever there was a celebration in the office, he would come into my cabin with a mischievous smile on his face and the paper plate with "nashta" in his hand and say "this is for you." On one such happy occasion I asked him what he thought of my idea of collecting funds for Mother Teresa's Asha Sadan Ashram at Bombay Central, and that whatever I collected he would match it equally. He of course most readily agreed. So I and a few other members of staff took the check to Mother Teresa and she happened to be there herself and had a few pictures taken with us.

I enjoyed my job immensely till 1984 when my father took seriously ill. I had to strike the right balance between work and parental duties. I was greatly stressed out and explained my situation to him. Mr. BKP just turned around and told me that I could come and go as I pleased — a most touching gesture. He again rose to the occasion when my mother passed away soon after my father's demise and I felt like taking a break in London. He gave me a leave of absence for a year. While I was in London, he soon visited with his wife Kantabahen and contacted me there. We had a most pleasurable evening together in a boat ride on the river Thames and a visit to a casino. I joked with him about being an ideal husband to Kantabahen and he very proudly said that Kantabahen had been extremely lucky for him. What a charming statement from a husband to wife which would make any woman feel proud of her man.

Mr. BKP's thoughtfulness continued even after I quit working. One day he phoned me and informed me that he had decided to grant me 100 shares of Pidilite stock from the Director's quota. I treasure these gestures of BKP. Even today, he continues with my Diwali gift subscription of *Reader's Digest*. I consider myself fortunate that I got a chance to be associated with BKP. One day I told my husband that BKP was the best person who had come into my life and quickly added "after you, of course."

SELF KNOWLEDGE

Gieve Patel

Balubhai (Mr. Balvant Parekh) has made useful contributions to many areas of our lives, and various persons will have pointed these out to us in the pages of this book. I would like to attempt, to the best of my limited capacity, to see if we could locate some root source from which these contributions have arisen. It is always best to begin with one's own personal experience.

Balubhai first surprised me, some fifteen years ago, when he said to me casually that if I needed financing for some of my projects in the arts, his Trust would be willing to help. I couldn't believe my ears. My wife, theatre director Toni Patel, and I had been struggling for years to raise funds for our work in the small-budget and experimental theatre. We had come to dread those humiliating meetings with prospective supporters, the drawing up of inflated plans to obtain niggardly sums of money, the boredom and frustration of talking to people you knew would never understand what you were attempting to achieve. Instead, here was a clear, open, and trusting offer. The incident made me realize that someone had been alert enough to look outwards, away from his own personal life and preoccupations, to examine where he could support someone else's life and preoccupations, even if these were of a kind that received limited public notice.

And so, alertness and a looking outwards.

But then, to become truly useful this must be accompanied also by a looking inward. Let me continue with my story.

When one has met an unusual person one may be excused for observing him with greater curiosity than is warranted by strictly polite correctness. It became a habit with me to observe Balubhai in this impolite way each time we met and had a conversation. From his behaviour, from things that came up in the course of our talk, often having no direct bearing on immediate matter of the talk, I was able to deduce that in many ways he was a person like any other. For instance, if he gave generously towards a cause he felt pleased with himself for doing so, exactly as you or I would in that situation; and he made no attempt to conceal his sense of self-satisfaction.

In short, he is as egoistical as one would expect most human beings to be. However, there was none of the unpleasantness that self-congratulating persons spill around themselves. We didn't feel that he was waiting for our thanks, we didn't feel that he would ask for something in return for what he had done for us. We felt acquired from his generous action. Now this was most unusual, and it made me even more curious to understand what it could be that guided his behaviour.

With continued conversations, leading questions, and a bit of skilful probing I was able to get to what I believe to be the root of it all. This person knows a great deal about himself. And he keeps this knowledge, this awareness, steadily before his eyes, so that his weaknesses, the common failings that all of us share, are not allowed to spoil or pollute the clarity of his generous actions.

All this sounds very simple, but it isn't. It implies a continuous looking into one's motives. And this is not possible without a fairly rigorous self-training undertaken over a period of many years.

THE TERRITORY IS NOT THE TERRITORY:
TOWARD A RESPONSIBLE EPISTEMOLOGY

PRAVESH JUNG GOLAY*

Abstract:
General semantics, being based on a functional notion of man, can hence be seen as a type of therapy with the motto, "know-thyself-as-a-constructive-epistemic-linguistic-abductor." It attempts to bring to our notice that "complete experience" and "pure description" are myths. It claims that 'knowledge' of the extensional world is not possible in terms of accurate representation but only in terms of approximations to 'reality' projected through our abductions (or *inferences*) and that 'knowledge' itself is characterized by *fallibility* and not *certainty*. This paper attempts to highlight the basis for these views upheld in general semantics and attempts to extend the maxim "the map is not the territory"' to include "…and the *territory* is not the territory."

It soon becomes evident through a brief survey of the "History of Ideas" that philosophical reflections pertaining to language are based on the recognition of two distinct domains, namely, the "world of things" (or the *extensional* world) and the "world of words or expressions about this 'world' of things'." (1) The former is what is usually labeled as 'reality' and the latter 'language.' However, the acceptance of this truism has been a fertile ground for philosophical discussions and debates that are registered throughout the "History of Ideas." One of the central concerns of these discussions and debates has been the nature of the relation between these two 'worlds.'

The "Depictional View"

A significant portion of Alfred Korzybski's writings and those of the upholders of general semantics can be read as works that refute or dissent from the commonly-accepted position that language *depicts* the "world of things." Let us call this view the *depictional* view. In this view, the relation of *depiction* or 'denotation' is taken to be the relation between the 'extensional' world and language resulting in descriptions of the world which under normal circumstances would be 'accurate'

*Pravesh Jung Golay received his Ph. D. in Philosophy from the University of Pune.

and 'complete.' (2) Advocates of this view hold that through the mediation of language, 'things' are somehow contained in words. Adherents of this depictional view take language to be a tool to represent the world. Though the depictional view has various shades and varieties, advocates and adherents to this position can be seen rampant throughout the "History of Ideas" since the pre-platonic era (3), but more importantly, this position, Korzybski argues, is what is upheld by the majority of language users.

The depictional view hinges upon the critical assumption that language merely verbalizes, or puts into a perceptible form, the extensional world we experience by somehow 'capturing' our experiences and 'containing' them in 'signs' or 'sounds' that are perceptible and accessible to our visual or auditory senses, thereby making communication possible. Language in the depictional view plays the crucial role of packing 'subjective' experiences of the 'objective' extensional world experienced by the individual and converting them into 'objective' packets that can be then communicated through language. The depictional view can thus be seen as operating with the implicit assumption that the 'subjective' experiences of this 'objective' world are converted to the *verbal* or *perceptible* level of expressions through signs and/or sounds by the mechanism of language. This assumption, with which the advocates and adherents of the depictional view operate, makes possible the 'objectivity' of communication since the individual as language-user is kept at a distance with all his subjectivity. As language is taken to be an *objective* tool of depiction, an individual merely uses the tool to perform the task of depiction with the performance of depicting being set apart from the *subjectivity* of the performer (the experiencer and the language-user) ensuring *objectivity* to the performance itself and thereby transferring this *objectivity* to the product, namely the expression(s) of this experience in language.

Korzybski's general semantics brings to our attention this pivotal assumption in the depictional view and takes issue with it. Korzybski highlights that the depictional view of the language-world relation is based on an assumption that overlooks an important fact: the structural 'space' between the *subjective* experience of the 'world of things' and the verbalization of this *subjective* experience (assumed to result in a 'description' of the extensional world) is not immediate but rather punctuated and mediated by two non-verbal levels. Namely, this experience is mediated by the individual's nervous system and by his larger environment, or what I refer to as the *facticity* or *situatedness* of his experience, before his experience gets verbalized. The recognition of this fact — viewing the individual not as an "experiencer" but, due to the mediation of these two non-verbal levels, as rather an "*expresser* of experiences" — makes us reconsider the assumption that language can be taken at face-value to be a non-interpretative tool for *objectively* depicting any experience of the extensional world.

Korzybski's contribution to epistemology is the introduction of the need to recognize these two interpolating non-verbal levels, namely:

(a) the processes of our nervous systems, and
(b) our *facticity* or *situatedness*, that we are 'beings' embedded in a historical time and culture with an unavoidable baggage of beliefs, biases, presumptions, cultural assumptions, etc.

The recognition of these two non-verbal levels as integral to the mechanism of the *experiencer-expresser* equation results diverges from the abstract notion of the *neutral-epistemic-subject*. Korzybski's general semantics replaces this notion with the subject "as-a-whole-in-an-environment, thereby including our neuro-semantic and neuro-linguistic environments as environment." (4)

With the advent of neuro-cognitive sciences, Korzybski's insistence upon the importance of the mediating structure of *my* nervous system in what *I* experience and what *I* 'think' *I* have experienced has now become undeniable. It would be a truism in the present time to hold that my nervous system is a sense-data processing unit operative through modes of *abstraction* and *projection*. (5) Through the process of *abstraction* the received sense data (experiences fed through my sense organs) is processed using the belief systems of the larger environment of my *facticity* in which I am embedded — my beliefs as function of my *situatedness* — and it is this processed product that is ultimately projected in an expression of my experiences.

The acknowledged role of the nervous system implies that the verbalization of my experiences must be something more than a mere depiction or simple description since I, as the subject, am not merely a passive *describer* as held in the depictional view, but rather I am an active subject — an *evaluator* (6) — a processing unit as the subject processes the sense data using my belief system. Therefore, what was hitherto considered "pure description" and hence an *objective* picture projected by the object or the 'extensional' world, in fact, turns out to be *my projection* of 'how-things-are-and-what-things-are.'

Korzybski claims that the neglect of, or indifference or ignorance toward, these two interpolating levels has led us to mistakenly believe that words are *depictive* of the extensional world and that language can be *descriptive* in relation to the extensional world.

Dissolution of 'Is'

Symbolically formulated, descriptions have the logical form *x is y* (where *x* is not *equal* to *y*, in which case it would be a proposition of identity rather than a description).

Given this form, it becomes tautologous to say that 'all' descriptions are cases of predications or attributions of the predicate y to the name x which stands for an object-thing-event in the extensional world.

In the depictional view, this is (or the copula is) taken to be an indicator of an assertion of a "pure description" since the transformation from the extensional world to the "world of words" is assumed to be direct and immediate. However, in light of Korzybski's challenge to this assumption, and the insight of the two mediating non-verbal levels (my *facticity-situatedness* and my nervous system), the notion of the 'verbal' level being "purely descriptive" and *objective* becomes an unjustified assumption, uncritically accepted by the depictional view. The statements hitherto held *pure* and *objective* in fact turn out to be more than a mere description since the *subjectivity* of the subject in terms of his/her *facticity* plays an essential role in the verbalization of the extensional world. The recognition of these two mediating levels transforms the very nature of the copula *is* and its variant forms from an indicator of an assertion of an objective and pure description to an indicator of an assertion or expression of a subjective evaluation conducted, either consciously or unconsciously, through the media of the nervous-system and the *facticity* of the asserter or expresser. Thus we see that words are not *purely* descriptive but are rather *indicators of evaluations*, and that human beings as language-users are not mere describers but evaluative interpreters, though the form of language may disguise expressions of evaluation in the garb of a grammatically-descriptive form.

The world of words or language is therefore not a *descriptive* medium of communication and expression but a medium of *evaluation*. It follows that language can never "purely describe" or "depict" or "reflect" the extensional world. Thus, if I look at language as a 'map' depicting the 'world of things,' which is the territory being mapped, the map can never be the territory since the map is an evaluative reflection of the subjectivity of the map-maker himself. In a more poetic way, "the words are not the things."

The dissolution of the is as description results in the dissolution of the notion of "qualities-in-the-object" as well, since the quality is not there in the object as supposed in the depictional view; my beliefs and nervous system abduct, or imprint, an order upon my experience. In other words, unlike the depictional view where the extensional world imparts to me a world of descriptions, in Korzybski's general semantics my experience is abducted by my belief system provided by my *facticity-situatedness*, resulting in an *evaluation* projected through my expressions and assertions — though these expressions are misleadingly clothed in the grammatical form of a description. Thus while the depictional view holds the extensional world as the provider of the content of my so-called-descriptions, Korzybski upholds my *subjectivity* as an *evaluative-abductor*.

Since under the depictional view, *is* reflects a description of the form *x is y*, the meaning of *x* is in terms of *y*. Hence meaning is imparted by virtue of definition, as amply highlighted in the Socratic method and instantiated in the Platonic dialogues.

However, in Korzybski's framework, the *is* in the grammatically-descriptive form *x is y* reflects the interpolation of my nervous system as well as my *facticity*. What *x* means to me, then, is not via "meaning as definition" but rather as "meaningfulness to-me given my situatedness-facticity in that threshold of space-time."

That is to say that in all levels of verbalizations, the territory can never be plotted objectively since no meaning is independent of the subject. For Aristotelians, 'knowledge' pertaining to the extensional world consisted of making rational deductions and inferences from "purely descriptive" factual expressions. For Korzybski, however, such 'knowledge' is a myth generated by the bewitchment of what he labels *elementalistic* language; language by which one can distinguish between elements constituting a whole that one cannot, in fact, separate in 'reality.' To ignore Korzybski's caution against *elementalistic* evaluations would lead to what I term the "elementalistic fallacy" — a confusion arising by confusing *separables-in-language* with *separables-in-reality*. For example, elementalistic language allows me to talk about the "flavor" of the extract of a tealeaf independent of the extract of the tealeaf. I cannot, however, in fact separate or split the two in reality, since the extract of the tealeaf and what I call its "flavor" form an inseparable organic-whole ontologically.

Aristotle committed this fallacy since he assumed that "emotions" and "feelings" which are linguistically distinguishable from "thoughts" are, in fact, separable ontologically or in reality as well. Korzybski, on the other hand, rejects the possibility of such a separation; hence "rational knowledge" without any shade of subjective feeling and "emotion" are the result of an elementalistic fallacy. The insistence upon "knowledge" being *objective* and not infused with *subjective* elements (such as "emotions" and "feelings") accounts for the elementalistic fallacy throughout the "History of Ideas." Korzybski argues that man, being an *organism-as-a-whole-in-a-current-environment*, cannot be split into 'thoughts' and 'feelings'; instead, he proposed the non-elementalistic term *semantic reaction* to refer to the organic unity of thought-reactions-feelings which cannot be separated as either 'rational' or 'emotional.' Thus Korzybski brings to light a new brand of epistemology, which I term *responsible epistemology* in which the subject plays a pivotal role and is responsible for the evaluative *is* in his grammatically-descriptive expressions.

This is, however, distinct from the Kantian subject-centered epistemology. Unlike Kant, Korzybski does not derive the subjectivity of the subject from transcendental conditions of *a priori* forms of perception and understanding. Rather, Korzybski bases the subjectivity of the subject on our *facticity-situatedness* and our neuro-cognitive and neuro-semantic states. Thus while the Kantian subjectivity is based on the transcendental condition of 'knowledge,' Korzybskian subjectivity is based on the existential condition of the subject. Thus while the dismantling of qualities

in Kant is only apparent, since the transcendental *a priori* categories or forms of understanding rescues the objectivity of predication through the universality of these forms, Korzybskian dissolution of predication and thereby of qualities is complete.

Dissolution of 'Objects'

Korzybski's general semantics proceeds further with the deconstruction of the depictional view by deconstructing yet another assumption on which the depictional view is based; namely, the implicit belief that a *name* (label, term, symbol, etc.) has a unique power to preserve and reproduce the experience of the *object* it names. Thus, the depictional view assumes the *is* in demonstrative expressions of the form *it is … this is… he is … she is … that is*, etc., to be an implicit indicator of a "frozen experience." That is to say, when I state that "this *is* Smith" or "this *is* a table," I am implicitly assuming that the *is* here is not an *is* of mere predication but an *is* indicating identity or sameness in the predicates being predicated — even though the object that is the source of my present experience may differ temporally or spatially. (7) I implicitly hold that when I say "this *is* Smith," the source of experience or the object I called "Smith" yesterday ($Smith_x$) is the same object that I am calling "Smith" today ($Smith_{x+1}$), or that the thing (T_1) in front of me here is same as the thing that I have at home that I call a "table" upon which I write (T_2), when I say "this *is* a table." Thus, the depictional view operates with the implicit assumption that $Smith_x$ is identical to $Smith_{x+1}$ or T_1 is identical to T_2, thus:

(a) providing an *object* status to the entities called "Smith" and "table," and
(b) 'freezing' the experience of the entities called "Smith" and "table," thereby binding my experience of yesterday with my experience today, and my experience 'here' with my experience 'there.'

General semantics, following Korzybski, does not raise the voice of dissent against this underlying assumption itself, for the act of 'freezing' our experiences in language is inevitable and even necessary for communication itself. To ban this 'freezing' of experiences would be foolhardy since naming each experience of an object with a name would consequently overpopulate our "world of words" with names. In fact, Korzybski alleges that 'freezing' experiences in space-time is the distinctive characteristic of man as a *time-binder*. In other words, it is the unique ability of man that he can relate the experiences of the past with the those in the present and carry them forward to the future.

The disagreement with the depictional view is rather that it loses sight of this fundamental assumption itself, and thereby holds that the object itself is 'frozen' in time-space, consequently overlooking the fact that it is the *I* — the subject — who has this capacity to freeze *my* experiences of objects and verbalize these frozen experiences through names, labels, etc. The depictional view overlooks this

operative assumption when it ascribes the 'freezing' (which by necessity involves the active participation of the experiencer) solely as a function of the 'the frozen.' In other words, the depictional view, by overlooking this assumption, mistakes my "freezing of *my* experiences" as experiences of *frozen sources themselves*. Through this act of implicitly equating *freezing* with *frozen*, the depictional view grants me the legitimacy to speak of objects in the extensional world using names in my expressions that denote 'sameness' of the sources of these experiences. This implies that the depictional view implicitly assumes that my experiences of these objects in the extensional world are in a sense "complete" since the sources of these experiences themselves are *frozen* in space-time and that a *name* merely substitutes it when these experiences are verbalized.

The notion of 'frozen' experiences has played a key role in the domain of epistemology, though many have voiced objections to it in the "History of Ideas" since before Socrates. Objections have been unable to sustain themselves, however, because if *knowledge* is to be characterized by *certainty,* then the referent of the *name* in the extensional world must be static and unchanging too. An extensional world consisting of constantly changing referents would render any talk of *certainty* of experiences as impossible. This would result in the impossibility of assigning a definite truth-value to any assertion pertaining to the extensional world, and would render the whole notion of "Truth" a mythical character. The depictional view salvages the notion of "Truth" by implicitly bestowing a 'frozen' status to the extensional world, but it does this at the cost of turning a blind eye to the very unique characteristic of man as a *time-binder* — a being bestowed with the capacity to 'freeze,' store, reproduce, and pass on experiences.

Korzybski's general semantics attempts to restore the centrality of the role of the *I* as a *subject* in the very phenomenon of 'freezing' experiences, thus further strengthening the framework for a new *responsible epistemology*. It is only through the recognition of this responsibility as a subject that *I* as an epistemic-linguistic-being can attain a state of epistemic-linguistic maturity. The recognition and acceptance of *responsible epistemology* based upon the centrality of the *I*, or the subject in epistemic-linguistic processes, Korzybski argues, would pave the dawn for the manhood of humanity (7).

The realization of the centrality of the subject as a being capable of 'freezing' experiences brings about the dissolution of *objects* as such. Logically speaking, therefore, the deconstruction of the grammatical form *x is y* is complete. The dissolution becomes complete because not only is the *is* here *subjective*, as discussed earlier, but both *x* and *y* can no longer be taken as merely naming "frozen objects" in the extensional world. They are rather names of *processed-projections of the experiences that I have had and which I have frozen.* In other words, *names* do not denote objects in the extensional world but rather my *'frozen experiences'* of these objects (8).

With the *I* or the subject moved to the center of epistemic-linguistic structure, *fallibility* instead of *certainty* becomes the prime characteristic of 'knowledge' pertaining to the extensional world. The characteristic of 'knowledge' as *fallible* is strengthened even more because an extensional world minus frozen objects requires the acknowledgement that experiences are not 'complete.' This insight can be scientifically strengthened by the fact that as a finite being in terms of my perceptual organs, I am not biologically able to experience the extensional world in its 'objective' totality. Scientifically speaking, objects have spectra of qualities which are imperceptible to me as a biological being due to the fact of my empirical limitations. Thus the very source of my knowledge of the extensional world, namely my experiences, themselves are 'incomplete', apart from the fact that they are ordered by my nervous and belief systems. Consequently, I have no empirical scope for accessing the extensional world *per se*. Therefore my 'knowledge' pertaining to the extensional world cannot be attributed a strict either-or dichotomized notation of truth-value, but can be assigned only *degrees of 'truth.'* The rejection of a system of strict either-or dichotomy is a consequence of the fact that the only way an expression of an experience (E_1) can be falsified or justified is through yet another experience (E_2). But since experience itself is never 'complete', therefore, E_2 is also not 'complete' but can at best be regarded a greater approximation to 'truth' and not the discloser of 'truth' itself.

Thus not only are words *not* things, but the things that I take as 'things' are not the things themselves. To put this metaphorically, we could say that not only is it the case that the map is not the territory, but also that *the territory we map is never the territory*.

Notes

1. Kenneth G. Johnson, *General Semantics: An Outline Survey*, 3rd Edition. Institute of General Semantics Inc. (2004), p.3.
2. The term 'normal' here implies that one is not lying, has no defects in his/her sense organs, is physically and psychologically fit, is not joking, is not under any illusion, and is involved in a first person utterance.
3. This interesting task of enumerating the adherents and advocates of the depictional view is not undertaken here since it would require a space of its own, and could and will be taken up in an independent paper. Furthermore, this historical survey would neither strengthen nor weaken the main thrust of my paper, for I am not arguing for the novelty of general semantics here but rather only explicating its theoretical basis and extending it.
4. Alfred Korzybski, "The Role of Language in the Perceptual Process" from

Perception: an Approach to Personality, edited by Robert R. Blake and Glenn V. Ramsey. The Ronald Press Company: New York (1951). Reprinted in *Alfred Korzybski: Collected Writings 1920-1950*, edited by M. Kendig, Institute of General Semantics, Inc. (1990)

5. To quote, "mechanisms of perceptions lie in the ability of our nervous system to abstract and to project." Ibid., p.686.
6. To quote, "Abstracting by necessity involves evaluating, whether conscious or not …" Ibid., p.686.
7. It must be noted that some thinkers like Hume do not hold the notion of 'sameness' as being synonymous with the notion of 'identity' and relate the former with the notion of 'unity'. We, however, ignore this Humean distinction here since Hume holds this distinction to conclude that the notion of an 'unchanging' object is 'fiction'; a conclusion similar to Korzybski's. See *Treatise of Human Nature*, edited by Selby-Bigge, 2nd edition, rev. P.F. Nidditch, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985, p.200.
8. Korzybski's first major work, *Manhood of Humanity*, is based on this thematic exploration.
9. Korzybski suggests remedial methods such as 'indexing,' 'dating,' etc., in linguistic practices to generate awareness of the implicit subject's act of 'freezing' experiences via 'names.' This method, which constitutes the method of E-Prime, must however, be distinguished from the 'Ideal-language' thesis of the Analytic philosophers like Russell and Frege. Unlike the latter, general semantics does not declare that an ideal or a logical language will be any better than our ordinary language and holds that the real solution lies in adopting 'responsible epistemology' and bring to the awareness of human beings that the subject is the centre of any 'epistemic-linguistic' structure.

Author Pravesh Jung Golay and seminar leader Andrea Johnson

PRIMARY COLORS (OF MISEVALUATION)

DEVKUMAR TRIVEDI*

Spectrum: A ray of light traversing through a prism widens into a broadening spectrum of seven colors. Many more colors and shades can be created by mixing them. However, at the root of the entire range of colors there are only three primary colors; red, yellow, and blue. Whatever is colored has one or more of these primary colors.

Coloration: A misevaluation is a 'colored' perception, inference, expression, or behaviour, not in consonance with reality or sanity, and consequently results in injustice. This writing is an attempted exegesis of three distinct stages of coloration — primary colors — in the process of misevaluation.

Existence: Unless a person is a narcissistic solipsist, it is posited that there is existence out there. Whatever the name given to it: cosmos, galaxies, stars, matter, energy, life, species, objective real world — *being* is a postulate given and accepted. Human beings, as one form of life, have experience of happenings, events, episodes in the outer or inner world. Understanding the inter-links of the continuous interactive process of experience helps in refining the process of evaluation. The most comprehensive entirety of contexts, from the outermost universe and environment to the nano-est nano particle constitutes being, the subject of ontology. The ancient Upanishadic adage *Aatmaanam Viddhi*, i.e. "know thyself," and *Saa Vidyaa Yaa Vimuktaye*, meaning "true knowledge is that which liberates," are relevant in this context. Unless we know the very instrument gathering knowledge, we cannot truly have full knowledge liberating us from complexes and prejudices.

German philosopher Immanuel Kant distinguished between *noumena*, meaning things in themselves irrespective of thought, understanding, space, or

*Devkumar Trivedi, a free-thinking inquirer-philosopher, a lifelong learner and at heart, an educationist, gives his profession as a superannuated Finance Secretary of the Government of Delhi. Widely travelled, he writes poetry and plays music. As a creative communicator, he draws from performing arts, talking to the heartbeats of learners and listening to the eyes of the audience. His presentations are given in experimental modalities of concentrated visualizing, closed-eye listening, silent revelatory reading, dramatic rendering, musical recitation and participative singing.

time, and *phenomena*, meaning things as they are observed and as they appear to us. *Noumena* are a mystery, unknowable. People only know *phenomena* as they experience. So let us understand experience.

Experience: A computer cannot experience the way individual humans do. But a living biological object geared towards procreation, individual death but survival of species, feeding on biological resources, aided by a complex system called brain consciousness and mind, can experience. *Homo Sapience* has a 'mind,' traditionally understood as personalization of brain. Consciousness is the first hand experience of the brain, an emergent property of the brain. The two are entirely different concepts. The mind is made up of the physical connections of neurons. These connections evolve slowly and are influenced by our past experiences and therefore everyone's brain is unique, even of identical twins. When you lose 'mind' you can still be conscious. On the other hand, under anesthesia or sleep we do not lose 'mind.'

In this very complex unitive system of integrated systems called human being, how does one 'know'? Traveling through the route of neurons, how does language colonize mind-space and build space-stations of concepts? The human genome has been fully mapped but neuroscientists have yet to unravel fully the mystery of 'knowing' and 'learning' beyond the tangled plexus of dendrites and ganglia of neurons through synapses in the brain. Would it be possible some day to implant a micro-bio-chip of 'scientifically perfected' language in a brain easily and affordably? Who and what is this *I* that experiences the intimations of existence? Experience of being is, to my thinking, the genesis of *epistemology*. So at the present stage of our limited knowledge let us try to understand these epistemological stages.

Stage One: Happenings impinge upon the neural network spread all over the human organism through various senses. Even at the pre-natal stage, 2.5 million neurons are created per minute and in an adult human brain weighing about 1.5 Kg there are about a hundred billion neurons to which through almost 500 trillion synapses the bodily neural network is connected. Whatever may be the impressions gathered through the direct imprints on senses, the world is not always the way it appears to our senses. Still frames moved at a steady pace of 24 frames per second in a movie hall give an experience of witnessing lively movements which is not borne out by reality.

Stage Two: We experience the earliest organismal reactions, like a knee-jerk or blinking of the eye. These are thalamic reflexes of a primitive heritage of evolution, essential still for safety and survival. Thalamic thrusts, reflexes like fear, flight, attraction, pleasure are immediate reactions.

The above two stages are of raw experience. The very structure of an apparatus determines its functions. The senso-neuro-thalamic structure of the human body constricts the range of impact of happenings. The eye of the eagle sees much more sharply, the dolphin hears a wider range of sounds, and the dog sniffs out truffles which humans cannot. I call this limiting apparatus of imprints on human bodily receptors, *anthroposcope*. Processing through physical human body, the scope of *anthroposcope* is restricted and it can confuse and mislead, coloring red, the first primary color of misevaluation.

Stage Three: The process of abstracting, thinking, putting into words, and locating of lingual maps commences. The process involves cortical reflection beyond the immediate thalamic reflexes. Instant reaction graduates to mediated response, classifying, categorizing, critical, and discerning. Putting into words, written, spoken, or even unspoken but just mulled in the mind — I refer to this as the process of *wordalizing*. Words are signs ascribed with meaning and significance and constitute the pigeonholes of concepts through which the pattern of experience is comprehended. "Rational animals" (i.e., humans) bind time with words.

But between raw experiences and *wordalized* maps is an impenetrable and impermeable wall. No time-binding can ever transport a direct experience. No direct experience can be felt through language. Sweet taste can only be experienced, and no explanatory encyclopoedic tomes can give the pleasure thereof. With all such limitations, language still serves a useful purpose of acquiring knowledge, circumventing the long-winding path of learning only by first hand experience for each person. I call the apparatus of human languages with their structural limitations, by the name *semantoscope*. But words can indoctrinate, misinform, and mislead, coloring yellow, the second primary color of misevaluation.

Stage Four: The process of evaluation which may be expressed in words or in behaviour. After the neural filters and lingual filters, the value filters start sieving experience as acceptable, rejectable, worthwhile, or worthless. Experience is valued in terms of strong sterling values or in counterfeit currency of fake values. Sapience and sanity in a society are determined by the prevalent values. I call this apparatus, the sieve of personally-accepted individual human values, by the name *axioscope*. By values one can be preferential, prejudicial, imbalanced, unjust, and thereby misled, coloring blue, the third primary color of misevaluation.

A study of general semantics at first gives a predominant impression that much of misevaluation occurs substantially because of inadequate study and improper use of language maps. The main thrust of this article is to highlight the role played

by all three primary colors — what I refer to as *anthroposcope*, *semantoscope*, and *axioscope* — as factors in the process of misevaluation. In curved mirrors only distorted images, aberrations of reality, can be seen. Similarly, the degree of abnormal structure of the three *scopes* described here contribute to a lesser or greater degree to the magnitude of misevaluation.

Many (if not 'all') of our adjectives themselves are statements of evaluation: s*mart, beautiful, exhilaratin*g, etc. Values, whether socially adopted or personally accepted, can directly and exclusively contribute to misevaluation even if — repeat, even if — the anthroposcope and semantoscope give undisputedly uncolored views. Thus *nationalism* is to one group what *arrogance* is to an individual. The value of a superior race spawns holocausts. A blood-brother is benefitted by nepotism. Doctrinal tethers deprive individuals of freedoms of various kinds. A white racist considers black skin dirty and ugly even if he himself has not bathed for a month and is unkempt and untidy.

When a value is not integrated harmoniously with a network of other values it is put above them. The one non-tangible, the not seen, the unpractical is put first and this dominant value guides, organizes, and represses all others. Even with the healthiest anthroposcope and most sophisticated semantoscope, as in the above instances, the axioscope alone can be responsible for misevaluation.

In examining the multiple miscellanies of misevaluations, however, we must remember this. "Through the looking glass" (from Lewis Carroll), much of what we see is at variance with reality to some degree or the other. What we see with the mind's inner eye is either colored (not clear), constricted (tunnel view), or confused (not sharply focused). In the words of the poet Shelley, "Life, like a dome of many-colored glass, stains the white radiance of Eternity until death tramples it to fragments."

Wars, conflicts, ideological clashes, social tensions, inter-personal discords, etc., can be appreciably reduced if misevaluations primarily colored by anthroposcope, semantoscope, and axioscope are consciously contained, and evaluations made more sane and realistic by increasing awareness of the limitations in which *Homo Sapience* lives and functions.

Postscript: In the valedictory address at the Workshop at Vadodara, Mr. B.K.Parekh, a pioneer, veteran, and patron of general semantics, observed that all heightened awareness should eventually impact behaviour. He suggested lightly that general semantics, to begin with, may be practiced at home with the spouse. Taking a cue, spouses in my family have resolved to agree that when arguments become heated and stances turn increasingly inflexible or blind, one or possibly both partners should genuinely say "Probably You Are Right." This GS mantra is summed up in the acronym PYAR — a word which in most Indian languages means *love*.

SYAT VAADA: THE VIRTUE OF OPENNESS

SWAMI SUKHABODHANANDA

One of the most beautiful yet practical teachings of Jainism is *Syat Vaada*. If one truly practices it, the beauty of it will be revealed as an inner freedom. Syat Vaada says everything is relative and nothing is absolute. Thousands of years before the theory of relativity, Jain seers spoke its language. Syat Vaada can better be understood through a story.

> A poor Chinese farmer found a beautiful black horse on his farm. The king heard about this wonderful horse and offered a huge sum for it. The farmer humbly rejected the offer. All the villagers told him that he was stupid in rejecting the offer from the king. The farmer answered, "Maybe." After a few days the horse was found to be missing. The villagers once again told the farmer, "Do you realize you were unwise?" The farmer answered again, "Maybe." After a few more days the horse came back with another 20 horses. The villagers now told the farmer, "You are really wise by not selling the horse." The farmer again answered, "Maybe."
>
> The farmer's only son, while training the horses, fell down and broke his leg. Meanwhile, a war took place in China, and all youngsters had to go to war except the farmer's son as he was not fit. The villagers once again said, "You are lucky, your only son is saved." The farmer yet again said, "Maybe."

This illustrates the Syat Vaada argument that things are relative. How does one practice Syat Vaada in daily life? When an opinion is made of a person, the question to be asked is: "Is it absolute or relative?" Whenever one makes an opinion of others and absolutizes it, then one stops seeing the person as a flowing being. Nobody is static, everyone is a flowing being. To absolutize is to destroy the basic quality of an individual as a flowing being.

Syat Vaada involves applying it in the following ways in our daily lives:

Contributed by Devkumar Trivedi from the *India Times*, 3 April 2001.

a) As far as I know
b) Up to a point
c) To me

The quality of our life depends on the quality of our relationship. Keeping the perception of our relationship relative is keeping it open. Being open gives ventilation to life.

If someone says Mr. X is stupid, then he is not practicing Syat Vaada. But if he says "as far as I know, Mr. X is stupid" then he avoids labeling the person and at the same time validates his perception; yet remains open to other variables which might not make the other person stupid.

So often we are prisoners of our own knowledge. So by saying, "as far as I know," I recognize my knowledge as not absolute and at the same time I acknowledge whatever I know, and I also stay open to other variables. In this process, I am setting myself and others free by not labeling the other. We most often tend to label others and see only the labels and not the person. This is an ignorant way of living. Jainism is telling us to live a life of Syat Vaada and be wise. The wise person creates happiness and the unwise creates unhappiness.

Secondly, practicing Syat means "up to a point." If I can make statements like "up to a point this person is bad," then I am allowing myself to see beyond my limiting perception. Any person is bad up to a point. Even a thief is bad only up to a point, but he will do good acts for someone for whom he cares. So how can we say that the thief is bad in absolute terms?

Thirdly, Syat Vaada can be applied as "to me." In our perceptions and in our opinions of others, we tell ourselves that a person is bad "to me" and not that he is bad in absolute terms. Such a perception is more factual.

We suffer in life when we make absolute statements about others and ourselves. We can set ourselves and others free by practicing Syat Vaada, which says "maybe" or that "things are relative." When we operate on a relative plane, we are open to other possibilities. Creativity happens in the space of openness.

When we are open, we see opportunities. There are far more opportunities than we think. When opportunity knocks, a wise person is open to the opportunities, whereas an unwise person complains. So openness is a great virtue, which is the result of the practice of Syat Vaada.

Excerpts from
Gamtano Kariye Gulal*

Compiled by Balvant K. Parekh

from Volume 1, July 2003

Dedication

With a deep sense of Gratitude to all those who have played a part in enriching my life, both in Inner and Outer World.

Preface

I have decided, as an experiment, to privately circulate a journal which will contain:

- Some quotes and some poems which have touched my heart and which I would like to read again and again.
- Excerpts from articles, journals or books which I have found interesting.
- My writings — if I succeed in writing something interesting and useful.

Initially I propose to publish two or three volumes in a year as and when ready (no fixed month). The name *Gamtano Kariye Gulal* has been selected from the poem by the well-known Gujarati poet Makarand Dave to whom I am extremely grateful.

I sincerely request the reader to send me a genuine, honest and frank feedback to help me to decide whether it is worth continuing this experiment or not.

I take this opportunity to express my gratitude to all those writers and publishers from whose journal, articles, or books I have taken quotes, poems, or excerpts. I have been fortunate in realizing several dreams in my life. I feel quite happy to see realization of one more dream.

I complete this preface with a quote by Alfred Korzybski with a little change: "All human achievements are cumulative. No one of us can claim any achievement exclusively as his own. We all use consciously or unconsciously the achievements of others, some of them living but most of them dead." We should always remind

** If you get what you like, don't keep it; rather, share it.*

ourselves that we owe a debt to all of them whom we should repay by contributing in any small manner for social good.

If you have an idea, and I have an idea, and we exchange these ideas, then each of us will have two ideas. — *George Bernard Shaw*

A little more kindness, a little less creed,
A little more giving, a little less greed,
A little more smile, and a little less frown.
A little less kicking a man when he's down,
A little more we and a little less I,
A little more laugh and a little less cry.
A little more flowers on the pathway of life.
And fewer on graves at the end of the strife. — Anonymous

from Volume 2, April 2004

A hundred times a day, I remind myself that my inner and outer life depends on the labours of other men, living and dead, and that I must exert myself in order to live in the same measure as I have received, and am still receiving. — *Albert Einstein*

The belief that there is only one truth, and that one is in possession of it, is the greatest source of evil in the world today. — *Unknown*

When the people fear the government, you have tyranny. When the government fears the people, you have freedom. — *Thomas Paine*

In nature there are neither rewards nor punishments; there are only consequences. — *Robert B. Ingersoll*

It is my guess that most educated persons in India are not familiar with the discipline of 'general semantics' founded by Alfred Korzybski. The following excerpt is taken with thanks from Pula's Guide for the Perplexed: A general semantics Glossary *by Robert Pula, published by the International Society for general semantics, California. I hope the reader will be interested to know more about general semantics. I intend to include in every volume excerpts from other journals and books dealing with general semantics. — BKP*

General Semantics (I)

General semantics can be called a system, i.e., a set of related propositions (statements), first formulated by Alfred Korzybski in his major cumulative work, *Science and Sanity*, published in 1933. Korzybski's system is concerned throughout with what he called *structure*: a complex of relations. The structures (relations, orderings, often complex) Korzybski most concerned himself with may be laid out as follows:

> *structure*$_1$ — the non-verbal world as given by physics, neuro-biology, etc., i.e., the responsible self-challenging sciences at a given date, moving cumulatively (time-binding) to the on-going present.
>
> *structure*$_2$ — the human organism-as-a-whole-in-an-environment-at-a-given-date, particularly focused with relation to its highly-evolved nervous system/brain.
>
> *structure*$_3$ — language(s), understood as symbol systems which organize (structure) our worlds in particular ways which may or may not be appropriate.
>
> *structure*$_4$ — behavior, what people do/say as an expression of all of the above.

Korzybski claimed that if we study and *apply* general semantics we can learn to better evaluate what seems to be going on in the world, ourselves included and, having done so, make new formulations for ourselves, to make things *better*. As you can see, a 'full' understanding of general semantics and its underpinnings may take some effort. Why not? The issues are only a matter of life and death and, avoiding death for a while, degrees of personal-social misery and happiness.

We can summarize for now: general semantics constitutes a neuro-linguistic, neuro-semantic system-discipline originally formulated by Alfred Korzybski for the understanding of and as a correction for human mis-evaluating.

The following excerpt is taken (with a few changes by me) with thanks from Levels of Knowing and Existence *by Harry L. Weinberg, published by Institute of general semantics. The reader will find here the usefulness of general semantics in our daily living. — BKP*

General Semantics – (II)

Everyone knows that it is silly to worry over problems about which we can do nothing, that it is childish to lose one's temper over trivialities, that unreasonable hatred harms us; yet we find it exceedingly difficult to stop worrying, losing our temper, or hating in spite of such knowledge.

We have begun to understand from psychoanalysis the great part played by unconscious, irrational processes in inhibiting over free and rational use of the simple and profound knowledge. That is why all such books variously titled *How to Stop Worrying, How to Be Happy Forever, How to Make Friends, The Power of Positive Thinking,* and the like have very limited usefulness. In short using a direct rational approach one cannot control unconscious irrational processes.

A question arises whether general semantics is another such methodology sharing all the weaknesses of these self-help books.

General semantics is a rational methodology to be used by the individual himself and consequently has some of the limitations of all rational systems for controlling the irrational. However, there are a number of important differences.

First, general semantics is a very broad methodology containing much more than directions for controlling worry, hate, feelings of inferiority /superiority, etc. It covers the whole range of human evaluation and the prescription offered control of such unwanted feelings or emotions are derivable from, but not inherent in, its basic assumptions and general theoretical foundations. Thus these prescriptions for control of the nonverbal level are not *ad hoc* admonitions as they are in most of the above mentioned books but are part of methodology for rational control of all problems of proper evaluations in any area whatsoever. They are linked both to an explicitly stated ethical system which is not in contradiction to anything known in science today and to an explicitly stated program for proper evaluation which is firmly rooted in psycho-neurological structure of man as known to date.

Secondly, it appears that most self-help books are largely self-defeating. What they prescribe is admirable but often the attempts to use these prescriptions can lead to an exacerbation of that which they seek to ameliorate. A person who directly attempts to stop his worrying may start to worry about his failure to do so. In general semantics terminology, this may produce vicious second order effects — worry about worry, fear of fear. However the relatively indirect long range approach of general semantics is more likely to succeed. By "relatively indirect" I mean that the problem of controlling the nonverbal levels of evolution is just one aspect of an overall pattern of proper evaluations on all levels of abstraction. By attacking

on all levels, we are less apt to provoke the anxiety that a specific backgroundless attack would do. Stating it in very simple terms, we can rarely say, "Stomach, stop churning! Butterflies, go away! Tensions, relax!" and have it happen.

General semantics cannot get at *all* of the causes of neurotic symptoms or irrational behavior. However, it will help with those causes which stem from misevaluations produced by the structure of the language we use in daily life — this is no small part.

But above all the usefulness of general semantics is most in our daily living by helping us to make correct evaluations and to avoid misevaluations.

from Volume 3, December 2004

A growing company of self-aware time-binders, explorers discoverers, pathfinders … mindful of their debt to time, will ask how it can be repaid — "What track will I have left behind to guide who follows me? What clearer vision of my mind will help another see? What saving sign for humankind will I bequeath as legacy?" — *attributed to Ted Daly in* Dare to Inquire, *written by Bruce I. Kodish, Ph.D., published by Extensional Publishing, Pasadena, CA.*

The man who thinks for himself learns the authorities for his opinions only later on, when they serve merely to strengthen both them and himself; while the book-philosopher starts from the authorities and other people's opinions, there from constructing a whole for himself; so that he resembles an automaton, whose composition we do not understand. The other man, the man who thinks for himself, on the other hand, is like a living man as made by nature. — *Arthur Schopenhauer*

There is a great man who makes every man feel small. But the really great man is the man who makes every man feel great. — *Chinese proverb*

Sometimes the majority only means that all the fools are on the same side. — *Anonymous*

Better that the mass of mankind should disagree with me and contradict me than that I, a single individual, should be out of harmony with myself or contradict myself. — *Socrates*

from Volume 4, July 2005

Lives of great men all remind us we can make our lives sublime and, departing, leave behind us footprints on the sands of time. — *Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*

Political language … is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable, and to give an appearance of solidity to pure wind. — *George Orwell*

A variety of dehumanizing faces is superimposed over the enemy to allow him to be killed without guilt. The problem in military psychology is how to convert the act of murder into patriotism. — *Sam Keen*

I would rather have a mind opened by wonder than one closed by belief. — *Spence*

The religion of the future will be cosmic religion – based on experience and free of dogma. — *Albert Einstein*

The most heinous and the most cruel crimes of which history has record have been committed under the cover of religion or equally noble motives. — *Mahatma Gandhi*

from Volume 5, March 2006

A physicist learns more and more about less and less until he knows everything about nothing, whereas a philosopher learns less and less about more and more until he knows nothing about everything. — *Anonymous*

All sciences are connected; they lend each other material aid as parts of one great whole, each doing its own work, not for itself alone, but for the other parts; as the eye guides the body and the foot sustains it and leads it from place to place. — *Roger Bacon*

Live as if you were to die tomorrow. Learn as if you were to live forever. — *Gandhi*

from Volume 6, December 2006

It is better to have enough ideas for some of them to be wrong than to be always right by having no ideas at all. — *Einstein*

Acting Simply — True leaders are hardly known to their followers. Next after them are the leaders the people know and admire; after them those they fear; after them, those they despise. To give no trust is to get no trust. When the work's done right, with no fuss or boasting, ordinary people say, "Oh, we did it." — *Lao-tzu*

from Volume 7, July 2007

To think is easy; to act is hard. But the hardest thing in the world is to act in accordance with your thinking. — *Goethe*

Man masters nature not by force but by understanding. That is why science has succeeded where magic has failed, because it has looked for no spell to cast on nature. — *Jacob Bronowski*

Each invention leads to new inventions and each discovery to new discoveries; invention breeds invention, science begets science, the children of knowledge produce their kind in larger and larger families; the process goes on from decade to decade, from generation to generation … — *Alfred Korzybski*

Selected sayings from Gandhi, compiled by C.D. Deshmukh

> I am conscious of my own limitations. That consciousness is my only strength.
>
> My life is an indivisible whole, and all my activities run into one another; and they all have their rise in my insatiable love of mankind.
>
> I have in my life never been guilty of saying things I did not mean – my nature is to go straight to the heart and if often I fail in doing so for the time being, I know that Truth ultimately makes itself heard and felt, as it has often done in my experience.
>
> I believe in the absolute oneness of God and, therefore, also of humanity. I have

always believed God to be without form. What I did hear was like a Voice from afar, and yet quite near.

Like every other faculty, this faculty for listening to the still small voice within requires previous effort and training, perhaps greater than what is required for the acquisition of any other faculty, and even if out of thousands of claimants only a few succeed in establishing their claim, it is well worth running the risk having and tolerating doubtful claimants.

Just as past and future are connected by an unbroken chain, so we have the responsibility towards future generations. We have inherited a moral imperative from our past to protect future generations and the world they inhabit. — *Randolph Wardell Johnston*

Everyone thinks of changing the world, but no one thinks of changing himself. — *Tolstoy*

If you try to improve another person by setting a good example, then you are really improving two people. — *Unattributed*

Devkumar Trivedi (left) and other workshop attendees display paper cutting results.

Proverbs of India

Edited by Devkumar Trivedi

The first and second are Gujarati language proverbs, the third is a Marathi language proverb, the fourth is a quote in Sanskrit language from the *Isha Upanishada* [stanza 15] a Hindu scripture, and the fifth, again in Sanskrit, is a quote from the *Bhagavad Gita* [stanza 48, chapter 18] which is a quintessential philosophical part in one of the chapters of the great epic *Maha Bharata*.

Aap Mua Vina Swarge Naa Javaye.

Translation: Nobody can enter the gates of heaven without one's own death.

Exposition: A person must exert himself to accomplish valuable goals, just as death by proxy, by delegating or outsourcing cannot secure heaven for a person by advance booking.

Utaavale Aambaa Naa Paake.

Translation: You cannot rush a mango tree to grow and yield ripe mangoes in a great hurry.

Exposition: Everything precious has an intrinsic natural pace of mellow growth, and it should not be altered. Can you skim through thoughtful writings of Kahlil Gibran, or accelerate a vacation to Hawaii, Himalayan tracking, or graceful hang gliding?

Saakar Disate, Godi Naay Disat.

Translation: Sugar cubes can be seen, sweetness cannot be seen.

Exposition: There can be no substitute to the understanding gained by an actual experience. One can read verbal [or wordal, as I pointed out in the workshop]

description about sugar or even see it, but only when you taste it in the mouth its quality of sweetness is understood by direct experience.

Hiranyamayen Paatrena Satyasya Apihitam Mukham
Tat Tvam Pooshan Anaavrunu SatyaDharmaaya Drashtaye

Translation: The face of Truth is hidden by your golden orb O Sun. Please remove it so that I can behold Truth.

Exposition: The ultimate substratum of all Truth is veiled by the golden dazzle of the Sun and the structure and limitations of the solar system. O god, reveal that Truth beyond the limits of my structure, my perception, my words, my knowledge, and my world limited to the passing show of transient phenomena.

Sahajam Karma Kaunteya Sadosham Api Na Tyajet
Sarva Aarambhaa Hi Doshena Dhoomena Agni Iva Aavruta

Translation: Even if somewhat defective in the beginning, follow only your innate nature. All beginnings are imperfect just as fire releases smoke in the beginning.

Exposition: Above all, to thy own self be true. One's own natural latent talents should be pursued to fuller self-realization and excellence. Any attempt to do widely divergently different things against one's natural grain will bring unhappiness all around. So follow your true self even if imperfect while learning and growing in the beginning. Know thyself and actualize your true potential.

Soul mates: spiritual bonding

The love that grew into friendship
and the friendship into soul mates,
Eternally till Eternity!

Painting and poem by Shelly Jyoti

INSPIRED BY THE LANGUAGE OF MUSIC

Chaitali Vaishnav*

Alfred Korzybski wrote: "If…we limit ourselves to verbal "thinking"…we are unable or unfit to see the outside or world anew…we handicap scientific and other creative work…If we think verbally, we act as biased observers and project onto the silent levels the structure of the language we use…which make keen, unbiased observations ('perceptions?') and creative work well-nigh impossible." (1)

Language often leaves me stumped by how limiting it can be. However, when I sing during music lessons or on other occasions, I find the experience quite liberating. The music connects tenuously, quite mysteriously with the time, the state of mind and spirit, and the occasion.

We know this about music — it is primarily the magic of the seven *suras* (notes) *Sa, Re, Ga, Ma, Pa, Dha, Ni* (or in English *Do, Re, Mi, Fa, So, La, Ti*). In Indian classical music, one may arrange these seven notes in endless permutations and combinations called *ragas*. Every raga has a unique personality, whereby it lends itself to a certain time of the day and/or to a certain mood or emotion. While most musical traditions in India are primarily oral, teachers today do allow their students to consult some notations. However, any student who desires to attain proficiency in classical music must listen to the teacher far more attentively than she must follow the notations.

Any training in Indian classical music begins with lessons in fluency — learning how to render the notes just so. Then, the student graduates to the next level; she learns how to sing the ragas and to discern how the same notes sound different in different ragas. Every musician brings to her rendition of a raga a uniqueness that is at once the function of the nature of raga-music and the musician's personal understanding of a raga. This in turn makes every performance very special — literally, like no other.

*Chaitali Vaishnav is a Lecturer in English at M. S. University of Baroda.

The raga system is well structured. Every music student is bound by the rules of the structure. Yet, the system is so flexible that though one teacher may teach a certain composition in one way and another teacher quite another, both compositions would be faithful to the raga. The compositions simply borrow different subsets of characteristic combinations from the basic design of the raga – the *aaroha-avaroha* (the ascendant – descendant notes).

The teacher intervenes during any music lesson to help the student grasp the nuances of the classical style. For example, it is the master's voice that tells the student that the *Ga* (*Mi*) in a particular raga must sound spent or exhausted (in *Raga Darbari Kanada* for instance), while the same note in another raga must be robust, energetic (as in *Raga Malkauns*). This nuanced rendition allows a raga to emerge and fully convey a desired mood or emotion. A misplaced emphasis on a single note or the lack of it can completely alter the raga. In fact, the musician might end up approximating another, quite different raga.

The language of music is therefore both rule-bound and open-ended. Any music lesson or musical performance aims to discover the multi-layered nature of every raga. The musician and listener alike pursue not perfection or correctness but new expression each time.

Born as we are in human communities where language serves as our most powerful tool of abstraction, evaluation, expression and communication, we must live with language, and the limitations of language. But it's possible to find more creative, more efficient, more competent means to express ourselves and to understand others.

When I want to compliment a person's cooking, I kiss her hand. The gesture conveys my emotions far more strongly than my words ever could. Nevertheless, sometimes a dish comes home and its maker does not. I have to call her, and I have to use language to tell her how good it was. Therefore, I say, "*Dear So-and-So, Thank you, it was* 'hand-kissably' *good.*" You will agree that this happens too often in our experience to ignore. The emotions, however strong or overwhelming, must finally find expression in language.

Can we seek inspiration from the language of music, which celebrates the tentative, the intangible, and which inspires the student to explore the possibilities rather than proclaim the finalities? Any expression or phrase, however appropriate to our needs today, might summarily change tomorrow when it no longer suits the purpose of evaluation or expression. What we can change is our attitude to language. It may help to recognize that at best, language operates in a frame of arbitrariness and tentativeness, and yet, we can rarely do without it.

Note

1. "The Role of Language in the Perceptual Processes," part of the reading material prescribed for the Twelfth National Workshop on "Cognitive Language Skills for the 21st Century" of the Forum on Contemporary Theory, November 03 to 05, 2007, Centre for Contemporary Theory, Vadodara.

Chaitali Vaishnav sings her presentation during the Baroda workshop.

THINK BEFORE YOU SPEAK

PRACHI REGE*

Our assumptions could lead to major communication problems. Prachi Rege attends a seminar on general semantics, a theory that makes us aware of our behaviour thereby setting a base for effective communication.

The daily experiences that you undergo do not or rather cannot include everything under the sun. It is because of this limitation in human beings that we tend to take situations in our life for granted. A recent seminar on general semantics held at the SP Jain Institute of Management and Research tried to articulate this problem.

General semantics is based on the premise that language does not exist apart from the human beings who create, use, and modify that language. Steve Stockdale, executive director, Institute of General Semantics, Fort Worth, Texas, who addressed the seminar, gave the example of taboo terms with reference to English songs. According to him every language has certain taboo terms. None of the 26 letters in English are obscene in themselves, but when Madonna composes her song where is the melody of the words lost?

However, *general semantics* is different from *semantics*, as the former deals with the behavioral aspect whereas the latter is concerned with the meaning in the words themselves.

General semantics is also a proper evaluation of language and the effects of language and is concerned with these aspects of human behavior. These include perception, construction, evaluation, and communication of our life experiences. Stockdale explains the process of human inference through a diagram. This begins with an acronym WIGO (what is going on) — this is the real world — next is our sensory perception, then the description, followed by our inference of our world. He illustrates this with a corporate example wherein an employee who comes

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late to work is signified as lazy by default. No one considers the extenuating circumstances that he/she might have faced.

So how does one apply general semantics? According to Stockdale, self-awareness is the best way to apply this methodology. This includes being aware of the situation one is involved in without coming to hasty conclusions. At the Institute it is part of the mass communication course. Here the students are taught to relate the principles of general semantics to their chosen professional fields like Journalism, Advertising, and Public Relations.

Absolutism in communication is another concept that general semantics attacks. How many times do you make the statement "the exact same situation happened four years ago?" asks Stockdale. He refers to the proverb "no two snowflakes are the same" and hence the absolutism must be dropped. According to him the word "best" is violated almost in every sentence where it is used, He cites examples of advertising slogans like "The Best Dressed Man," "Best Holiday Destination," etc. These slogans, Steve explains, manipulate the communication.

Similarly he cites the example of politicians who use absolutisms to communicate about their opponents or propagate certain ideas to fulfill their vested interests.

Stockdale reasons that we cannot live without assumptions, but the problem occurs when we start treating them as facts. So, one can follow general semantics by a systematic perception of life experiences rather than an obscure one.

Sidebar:

Some Common Mistakes While Speaking

- Confusing the word itself with what the words stands for
- Acting as if the meaning of the word used is contained solely in the word, without considering context or the individuals
- Confusing facts with our inferences, assumptions, beliefs, etc.
- Not accounting for the many "shades of gray" and looking at things as black or white, right or wrong, good or bad
- Using language to 'separate' that which in the actual world cannot be separated, such as space from time, mind from body, thinking from feeling

NATIONAL WORKSHOP ON GENERAL SEMANTICS

CHIRANTANA BHATT*

General semantics, although unfamiliar to the common man, concerns something that plays a significant role in our daily lives.The Twelfth National Workshop of the Forum for Contemporary Theory, titled "Cognitive Language Skills for Twenty-First Century," focused on general semantics.

Andrea Johnson, President of the Institute of General Semantics, U.S.A., and Steven Stockdale, its Executive Director, conducted the workshop.

This distinguished National Workshop was planned and organized by Mr. Balvant K. Parekh, Chairman of the Pidilite Industries, India, and President of the Triveni Kalyan Foundation. Speaking to *Divya Bhaskar*, Mr Balvant Parekh said that he had first read about general semantics, some twenty-five years back, in the journal *ETC*. General semantics, Mr. Parekh said, has been useful to him in every aspect of life, personal, social and professional. "In my professional work within my industry, I had noticed that my employees would, at times, understand what I had told them quite differently from what I intended to convey. General semantics was useful at such times in solving problems of communication."

Steven Stockdale, Executive Director of the Institute of General Semantics, told *Divya Bhaskar* that general semantics is of key importance to avoid the conflicts which result from unfulfilled expectations arising out of multiple possibilities before it. "General semantics enables us to keep away from generalizations and to avoid evaluating situations through prejudices."

Talking to *Divya Bhaskar*, Andrea Johnson said, "General semantics is not limited strictly to academic reading and information. Only when it is assimilated into life through meditative processes, could it be put into action. General semantic enables us to avoid coming under undue influence of any single factor and to examine all the different aspects of a situation in order to reach a proper conclusion. People who can question themselves are more readily able to grasp this subject. They are then able to understand that language is a symbolic expression, not a final verdict."

**From the 6 November 2007 issue of* Divya Bhaskar Daily, *Gujurat, India.*

TIME-BINDING IN INDIA

PROFESSOR PRAFULLA KAR*

The subject of general semantics, introduced by Alfred Korzybski in the 1930s, was almost unknown to India until very recently when Balvantbhai Parekh, Chair, Pidilite Industries in Mumbai, took the initiative to bring it to our door step by sponsoring the visits of Andrea Johnson and Steve Stockdale for seminars and lecture-programs in Western India during October-November 2007.

Although Balvantbhai has been spreading some awareness of the subject among his friends through intermittent circulation of excerpts from seminal essays included in his volume titled *Gamtano Kariye Gulal*, there was no institutional recognition of the importance of the subject until Andrea and Steve spoke on it in several lectures and workshops held in Mumbai, Ahmedabad, Anand and Baroda. The three-day national workshop that the Centre for Contemporary Theory in Baroda, organized during 3-5 November, brought together around sixty scholars from various disciplinary locations under the broad rubric of "Cognitive Language Skills" to debate on the subject and to think of the possibility of according it some institutional legitimacy within the curricular framework of higher education in India.

As the participants at the Workshop had got some familiarity with the field by going through the various essays handed out to them sufficiently in advance, the discussions that ensued after the talks by the two experts became lively and engaging. The written comments that each participant has left with us bear ample testimony to the relevance of the subject not only to the emergent discipline of Communication Studies, but perhaps more importantly to life as it should be lived.

Korzybski had directed his effort to turn human ingenuity toward positive and constructive goals at a time when Europe was ravaged by World War I, and developed the discipline of general semantics to make people aware of the utility

* P. C. Kar is currently Director of the Centre for Contemporary Theory, Baroda. He taught English at M. S. University of Baroda and Utkal University, Bhubaneswar. He was Deputy Director at the American Studies Research Centre, Hyderabad during 1982-86. He has a Ph.D. in English from University of Utah, Salt Lake City.

of a scientific approach to life. By scientific approach he did not mean to suggest that one had to uncritically accept everything that science had produced, but it was the inherent belief of science to question and to interrogate the ideas of the past against the current ideas tested adequately and proved beneficial that made scientific approach a necessary step toward achieving a sane society.

As language is the most important source of communication, its careful usage would help minimize social conflict, and thereby help in strengthening human relationships. Balvantbhai, an avid reader of general semantics texts, took to the subject almost as a passion, because it helped him in his business by teaching him how to succeed by being "human" and by avoiding unnecessary conflicts with the staff. Thus general semantics is not an academic discipline that has to be merely taught in the academy and discussed, but has a pragmatic orientation toward life and society in a larger sense. One has to *do* general semantics in one's everyday encounter with the world.

One should not be under the illusion that whatever one meets through a specular intervention is actually 'real' — in Korzybski's terms, "the map is not the territory." In order to make sense of the "territory" one needs to move away from its visual representation through a map. Here Korzybski is anticipating what Derrida said later in his philosophy of deconstruction, which posits that there is more than what meets the eye. Man, as a time-binder, has the innate capacity to transcend his limitations and move ahead in life through his analeptic and proleptic visions. But unfortunately many of us do not make any effort to utilize this great gift, and so we suffer and make others suffer. The merit of this great insight from Korzybski will no doubt enable us to live as human beings, with less bickering with the world and with more compassion and hope.

The three-day Workshop in Baroda and the lecture-programs conducted by Andrea and Steve in the States of Maharashtra and Gujarat have brought all of us who took part in these programs, closer together under the inspiring guidance of Balvantbhai, whose dream to spread an awareness of the benefits of general semantics in India has been partially realized. Now that the moment has come to build a structure on the foundation which has been laid by the visits of Andrea and Steve, we need to think ahead and to strive to erect the structure as a testimony to the great vision nurtured by Balvantbhai for the last 25 years.

AN EMERGENCE

SITANSHU YASHASCHANDRA*

George Eliot has carefully observed in her novel *Silas Marner* that there is many a circulation of the sap inside a tree before the bud finally appears on a branch. The general semantics 'bud' has now appeared and begun to blossom on a South Asian branch in western India. But the idea and the ways of general semantics have been circulating easily and surely in this part of the world for quite some time now. And that is because of the enlightened, selfless, and efficient efforts of Balvant K. Parekh. In his mindful work, perception and production meet and are evidenced in his library, laboratory, and industry. For most of us in India, who are now engaged in reception and spread of general semantics, the first GS sounds came as a duet between the American journal *ETC: A Review of General Semantics*, and the journal *Gamataano Karie Gulaal* ("Spread on freely what you cherish") compiled and distributed widely by BKP — as Balvant Parekh is fondly called by admirers and friends.

When he invited two scholars of GS from the United States and organized several workshops, seminars, and conference meetings in different Indian cities, the expectations here were derived from our reading of the papers and excerpts we had read in BKP's journal. The expectations were more like a rich liquid with a lot of suspended material in it. Andrea Johnson's and Steve Stockdale's visit to India was like a process of crystal-formation.

The fragrant bud on the tree, the sparkling crystal in the lab: these two images might suggest how elegant yet precise were the presentations from Andrea, Steve, and BKP, and their discussions on aspects of general semantics at different venues before different groups of participants. These participants included young and energetic students and researchers ("the argumentative Indians" of the famous Indian economist); writers, theater personalities, musicians and artists; leading Indian industrialists, entrepreneurs and administrators; learners from all over India.

*Sitanshu Yashaschandra, eminent Gujarati poet and dramatist, served as Vice Chancellor of Saurashtra University, Rajkot, and taught in the Department of Gujarati at M.S. University of Baroda. He is an eminent Gujarati poet and dramatist.

This indicated how India has perceived the character and application of general semantics.

A flowering tree needs to be nourished and a crystal needs to be protected: general semantics in India will need both in the coming decades. Under the democratic, enlightened, generous, active, and tremendously efficient leadership and comradeship of Balvant Parekh, the initial involvement of the cross-section of Indian society mentioned above will, I believe, grow in many directions.

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A POSTSCRIPT

BALVANT K. PAREKH

Some time around 1982 I came across a volume of *ETC: A Review of General Semantics*. I found many articles interesting, enlightening and useful for daily living and growing. Since then I have subscribed to *ETC* and have also purchased and read books referred to or advertised therein.

I found that general semantics is a very useful discipline which can be useful in living a saner life. However I found that somehow there was no awareness about this discipline in India.

In 2003, I decided to compile and publish an aperiodic journal which would contain some excerpts, quotes, poems, etc., which I have found interesting and worth sharing with others and distribute it free to relatives, friends and others who would like to read such a journal. In each issue I kept a section dedicated to general semantics. In the first issue I wrote:

> It is my guess that most educated persons in India are not familiar with the discipline of 'General Semantics' founded by Alfred Korzybski.
>
> The following excerpt is taken with thanks from *Pula's Guide for the Perplexed* by Robert Pula — published by the International Society for General Semantics, California. I hope the reader will be interested to know more about general semantics. I intend to include in every volume excerpts from other journals and books dealing with general semantics"

To my surprise every reader asked me, "*what is this 'general semantics'?"* No one had heard even the term *general semantics*.

In November 2005, Professor Sitanshu Yashchandra and Professor Prafulla Kar met me to request some financial support for the Forum for Contemporary Theory in Baroda (Vadodara). I agreed to their request. During one of our discussions in 2006, I realized that Professor Kar was the right person and his Forum the right

institution to introduce general semantics in India. I therefore offered financial assistance for three years to develop studies and research in general semantics.

Professor Kar informed me that he had decided to focus on general semantics for the thrust area for next annual workshop to be held in Baroda during November 2007. I suggested that we invite one expert from the Institute of General Semantics as this would be the first workshop in India and no one in India had experience in this field.

I wrote an email dated 17 April 2007 to Ms. Jennifer Carmack, (formerly) Assistant Executive Director. In that email I wrote "*It was a painful surprise to note from General Semantics Bulletin No. 72 (2006) that I am the only member of Institute of General Semantics in India*." The Institute's Executive Director, Mr. Steve Stockdale, replied and after some correspondence it was agreed and decided that Ms. Andrea Johnson and Mr. Steve Stockdale would both come to India.

The visit of Andrea and Steve and the seminars/workshops they conducted turned out far more interesting and instructive than I expected. Professor Kar, Professor Yashchandra, and Professor Laxmi Salvi who arranged one or more events also found their visit to India very much satisfying and beyond their expectations.

All of us who participated in one or more events were very happy to see the introduction of general semantics in India. We are hopeful of its further spread and development throughout India. This could happen only because of the visit and participation of Andrea and Steve, for which I sincerely thank both of them and the Institute of General Semantics.

GANDHI VALUES AND TERRORISM

AMARTYA SEN*

What is the relevance of Gandhian values in the world today? The aspect of Gandhian values that tend to receive most attention, not surprisingly, is the practice of non-violence.

Gandhiji's championing of non-violence, even when facing a violent adversary, has stimulated public reflection and enkindled political action in different forms across the world. Not least of Gandhiji's influences can be seen in the way courageous and visionary political leaders in many countries, including such luminaries as Martin Luther King in the United States and Nelson Mandela in South Africa, have been inspired by Gandhiji's ideas and values. The violence that is endemic in the contemporary world makes the commitment to non-violence particularly challenging and difficult, but it also makes that priority especially important and urgent.

However, in this context it is extremely important to appreciate that non-violence is promoted not only by rejecting and spurning violent courses of action, but also by trying to build societies in which violence would not be cultivated and nurtured.

Gandhiji was concerned with the morality of personal behavior, but not just with that. We would undervalue the wide reach of his political thinking if we try to see non-violence simply as a code of behavior — important as such a code is.

Consider the general problem of terrorism in the world today. In fighting terrorism, the Gandhian response cannot be seen as taking primarily the form of pleading with the would-be terrorists to desist from doing dastardly things. Gandhiji's ideas about preventing violence went far beyond that, involving social institutions and public priorities, as well as individual beliefs and commitments.

Some of the lessons of a Gandhian approach to violence and terrorism in the world are clear enough. Perhaps the simplest and one that has been much discussed

* Excerpted from *Gamtano Kariye Gulal* Volume 6, December 2006, compiled by Mr. Balvant K. Parekh. The full text of Mr. Sen's comments on the occasion of the 2005 presentation of the Jamnalal Bajaj Awards can be found at: http://www.mkgandhi.org/articles/g&world.htm.

recently is the importance of education in cultivating peace rather than discord. The implications include the need to discourage, and if possible to eliminate altogether, schools in which hatred of other communities, or other groups of people in general, is encouraged and nourished. This applies not only to militant madrassas, but also to other narrowly focused educational establishments in which a strong sense of sectarian identity is promoted, that distances one human being from another, on the basis of religion or ethnicity or caste or creed.

Bearing this in mind, and pursuing the general theme of the relevance of Gandhian values outside India, I ask the question: Is there something that America and Britain in particular can learn from Gandhiji's political analysis?

It might be thought that Gandhiji's lessons are widely understood in Britain and America, and at one level they certainly are. For example, militant preaching in mosques and madrassas have recently come under much scrutiny in Britain, especially after the carnage that London has experienced in the hands of home-grown terrorists. The British were shocked that young people from immigrant families born and brought up in Britain could be inclined to kill other people in Britain with such dedication. In response to this shock, many centers of hateful preaching and teaching are being restrained, or closed, in contemporary Britain, which is certainly an understandable move. But I argue that the full force of Gandhiji's understanding of this subject has not yet been seized in British public policy.

One of the great messages of Gandhiji is that you cannot defeat nastiness, including violent nastiness, unless you yourself shun similar nastiness altogether. This has much immediate relevance today. For example, every atrocity committed in the cause of seeking useful information to defeat terrorism, whether in the Guantanamo detention center or in the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq, helps to generate more terrorism. The issue is not only that torture is always wrong, or that torture can hardly produce reliable information since the victims of torture say whatever would get them out of the ongoing misery. Both of these points are undoubtedly true. But beyond this, Gandhiji taught us that the loss of one's own moral stature gives tremendous strength to one's violent opponents.

The global embarrassment that the Anglo-American initiative has suffered from these systematic transgressions, and the way that bad behavior of those claiming to fight for democracy and human rights has been used by terrorists to get more recruits and some general public sympathy, might have surprised the military strategists sitting in Washington or London, but they are entirely in line with what Mahatma Gandhi was trying to teach the world. Time has not withered the force of Gandhiji's arguments, nor their sweeping relevance to the world.

Gandhiji would have been appalled also by the fact that even though the United States itself, at least in principle, stands firmly against torture done on American soil

or by American personnel (indeed America has a remarkable history of codifying and asserting individual rights and liberties going back all the way to the amendments to the US constitution made already in the eighteenth century), there are many holders of high American positions who approve of, and actively support, the procedure of what is called "extraordinary rendition". In that terrible procedure suspected terrorists are dispatched to countries that systematically perform torture, in order that questioning can be conducted there without the constraints that apply in America. The point that emerges from Gandhiji's arguments is not only that this is a thoroughly unethical practice, but also that this is no way of winning a war against terrorism and nastiness. It is important to understand that Gandhiji not only presented to us a vision of morality, but also a political understanding of how one's own behavior can be, depending on its nature, a source of great strength, or of tremendous weakness. Indeed, Gandhian values have to be seen and understood in terms of the Gandhian arguments that sustain those values. No matter how well-armed with weapons one might be, a loss of moral character saps one's strength in a definitive way. The value of that lesson has never been greater than it is today.

Oddly enough, there is an uncanny similarity between the problems that Britain faces today and those that British India faced, and which Mahatma Gandhi thought were getting direct encouragement from the British Raj. I discuss this issue, among others, in a forthcoming book, called *Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny* to be published by W. W. Norton in March 2006.

Gandhiji was critical in particular of the official view that India was a collection of religious communities. When he came to London for the "Indian Round Table Conference" called by the British government in 1931, he found that he was assigned to a specific sectarian corner in the revealingly named "Federal Structure Committee." Gandhiji resented the fact that he was being depicted primarily as a spokesman of Hindus, in particular "caste Hindus," with the remaining 46 per cent of the population "being represented by chosen delegates (chosen by the British Prime minister) of each of the other communities."

Gandhiji insisted that while he himself was a Hindu, Congress and the political movement that he led were staunchly secular and were not community-based; they had supporters from all the different religious groups in India. While he saw that a distinction can be made on religious lines between one Indian and another, he pointed to the fact that other ways of dividing the population of India were no less relevant. Gandhiji made a powerful plea for the British rulers to see the plurality of the diverse identities of Indians. In fact, he said he wanted to speak not for Hindus in particular, but for "the dumb, toiling, semi-starved millions" who constitute

"over 85 per cent of the population of India."

Much has been written on the fact that India, with more than 145 million Muslim citizens, has produced extremely few home-grown terrorists acting in the name of Islam, and almost none linked with the Al Qaeda. There are many casual influences here. But some credit must also go to the nature of Indian democratic politics, and to the wide acceptance in India of the idea, championed by Mahatma Gandhi, that there are many identities other than religious ethnicity that are also relevant for a person's self-understanding and for the relations between citizens of diverse background within the country.

The disastrous consequences of defining people by their religious ethnicity, and giving priority to the community-based perspective over all other identities, may well have come back to haunt the country of the rulers themselves. In the Round Table Conference of 1931, Gandhiji did not get his way, and even his dissenting opinions were only briefly recorded without mentioning the source of the dissent. In a gentle complaint addressed to the British Prime Minister, Gandhiji said at the meeting, "in most of these reports you will find that there is a dissenting opinion, and in most of the cases that dissent unfortunately happens to belong to me."

Those statements certainly did belong only to him. But the wisdom behind Gandhiji's far-sighted refusal to see a nation as a federation of religious and communities belongs, I must assert, to the entire world.

RETROSPECT

63 Years Ago in The Lakeville (CT) Journal

Surindar Suri, Towards an Age of Science

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In the words of George Sarton, historian of science, science is humanistic; better science is more humanistic. Human issues are circular; man cannot get away from himself. A science of science, therefore, will be humanistic. Science distinguishes civilized mankind from the uncivilized; "more science" will help to banish the savage characteristics still lingering.

The attempt at formulating such a science of science is Alfred Korzybski's system of general semantics. In the present series of articles we shall make a survey of Korzybski's pioneering work in this extremely vital direction.

The problem of synthesis of knowledge no less than that of an adequate human adjustment turns on the formulation of a science of man. For man is the common factor of all knowledge considered as a human activity. The formulations of science should be considered in their significance to human beings. Without this anthropological standpoint, science can become an empty formalism with no commonly acceptable criterion of its meanings. For the purpose of our study, we distinguish three interdependent factors involved in the process of 'knowledge.' These are, first, the external world; second, the human beings; and third, the linguistic factors.

"Man," in the present enquiry, is an object of science, not to be taken for granted in any respect. It is probably true that as human beings we cannot formulate an ideally rigorous and exhaustive science of man. Nonetheless, enough is known about him in biology, neurology, sociology, psychiatry, etc., to go a long way in that direction.

The distinction of this "science of man" from what generally goes under the name of *anthropology* at the present time, is that it includes in its purview all the human activities ranging from the psycho-pathological behavior of the insane to the activities of scientists at their best. The inclusion of science, mathematics, etc., as human activities along with eating, sleeping, loving, hating, etc., is the basis of Korzybski's science of man and is the chief factor in accomplishing the synthesis of knowledge.

Thought and Object

The human brain occupies, psycho-physiologically, a dominant position within the human system. With a certain amount of abstraction therefore, we can consider science, mathematics, philosophy, psycho-pathological behavior, etc., as the activities of the nervous system, a central factor in the process of knowing.

In this somewhat abstract manner of speaking, therefore, all the above-mentioned activities can be considered as *neural* activities. What we know of neurology today, especially in conjunction with colloidal chemistry, has a bearing of fundamental importance on the question and considerations of science, philosophy, etc.

Another factor in the human activity of knowing is the 'world' external to each one of us, which affects us vitally in a variety of ways. The formulations of science are a summary record of the interaction of human organisms and the external world.

Science thus is a method of 'knowing' and adjusting to the external world. Ignorance of science is to that extent a failure to adjust. In the course of 'time' we have evolved a methodology of science, which helps us to know the external world purposefully or of necessity, for purposes of adjustment. The scientific method is important as the culmination of knowledge, and this enquiry we are undertaking is to be worked out by this method.

The problem of method is, therefore, of the utmost importance. As such, the prevalent method of science should not be taken for granted: it should be subjected to a detailed and thorough examination for its presuppositions and implications.

Language

We have so far considered two factors: the human being and the external world. We will now consider the third factor, language — the means of expression. It is obvious that what goes by the name of science, mathematics, philosophy, 'knowledge,' etc., consists of linguistic (symbolic) expressions. The influence of language — which includes spoken and written language, mathematical signs and expressions, and symbols of every type — upon human activities and affairs is a new but very important study. The type and extent of linguistic activity distinguishes not only the human beings from the animals but also the 'civilized' man from the 'uncivilized.' Psycho-pathological behavior can also be traced to certain attitudes towards the linguistic (or verbal) activity expressions.

Yet not enough is known of the 'nature' of linguistic activity and its influence upon thought. Like the role of the human being (more specifically, the role of the human nervous system) the role of language has been ignored though it is of fundamental importance. The importance is clearly revealed by the psychiatric study of psycho-pathology, whether of the severe type found in mental hospitals, or of the less severe type found among the maladjusted in everyday life. The attitude towards verbal or linguistic issues is the fundamental factor. A correct attitude toward linguistic issues is of the utmost importance for adequate adjustment and sanity.

We are concerned with language, first as a means of social communication, for our behavior is carried on through, and is greatly influenced by linguistic expressions. Second, all our knowledge — science, etc. — is linguistically formulated. Language is, in this sense, an instrument for our understanding of nature. Any (therefore every) theory is a linguistic expression; all advances in knowledge mean formulating new linguistic expressions (or, more rigorously, linguistic expressions of *new structure*). Further, a false or inadequate theory is a false or inadequate linguistic expression, and vice versa.

Every language (understood as including all verbal or symbolic activity) is associated with, or has arisen out of, certain types of experiences. In other words, every language has a certain historical background, consisting of experiences of human beings in certain types of circumstances. This underlying and unconscious historical background constitutes a set of unconscious assumptions underlying the present language. These involve the 'meaning' or significance of that language.

A language is as good as the assumptions underlying it. Whenever we use a language we are employing its historical and empirically acquired background or assumptions. If this background, or these assumptions, are antiquated and inadequate, then to that extent our behavior is distorted and maladjustment results. The first task, therefore, is to investigate the unconscious assumptions of the language; then next to 'modernize' these assumptions and bring them into the findings of contemporary knowledge.

It is well known that nearly all civilized languages originated in the prehistoric days of mankind when the human environment and experiences were very different from what they are like today. For instance, social structures were very different and scientific knowledge was very meager. In this prehistoric background, humans developed 'attitudes' and unconscious assumptions which now, under contemporary conditions, appear inadequate and misleading.

A fundamental assumption underlying the current language is *identification*. In its crude form it is exemplified in the identification of the name with the thing named. Such crude identification prevails among the less civilized and gives rise to the magical attitude toward symbols, words, etc. While this crude identification does not generally

survive among the comparatively educated, it is consciously or unconsciously involved in the language, and is the main factor in maladjustment and *unsanity* in the contemporary world.

Identity is implied in a certain use of the *to be* verbs (such as *is, am, were, are*, etc.). The reverse of identity is *consciousness of abstracting.* Consciousness of abstracting alerts us to the fact that the name *is not* the thing named; also that there are different levels (or orders) of abstraction, each abstraction progressively leaves out some characteristics of the thing named. When orders of abstraction are confused, maladjustments and unsanity result.

Language and the World Crisis

Since language is a means of interaction between the external world and human beings, it is demanded of it that it should be similar in structure to both of these. Since language is not the empirical world, the only similarity between symbols and what is symbolized can be structure. To be adequate and correct, therefore, language should be of similar structure to the human nervous system *and* to the external world. Human issues are circular.

The human nervous system, the external world, and language are therefore intimately interconnected. What we know of the external world is by means of our nervous systems; what we know of language is linguistic. Our knowledge of the functioning of the nervous system with which we want to adjust our language is by linguistic means. It is this intimate interconnection which stands in the way of our studying any of these factors in a detached and scientific manner, and this has led the contemporary world to a deadlock.

The present enquiry, which aims at building a science of man and a theory of sanity, thus leading to adjustment and peace, has for its point of departure the fundamental assumption of *non-identity*: one level of abstraction produced by the functioning of our nervous system *is not* another level; the name *is not* the 'thing,' the inference *is not* the description, etc. Non-identity is the instrument available for breaking the 'verbal' and 'human' deadlock, because by making ourselves conscious of the non-identity between *verbal issues* and the *empirical happenings*, the issues are clarified. It becomes possible for us to relate the verbal utterances with the external processes and makes it possible for us further to study the external world and evaluate whether the noises stand for 'something' or whether they are nonsense, etc.

From our study of the nervous system in its behavior, as exemplified in science, mathematics, and psycho-pathology, we can formulate the 'normal' functioning of the nervous system which makes for health and sanity. A non-normal functioning

of the nervous system means ill health, unsanity, and a troubled, inhuman, brutish life full of uncertainty, anxiety, bitterness, and cruelty which will inevitably lead to disasters and catastrophes. The 'normal functioning' here means a scientific formulation, not an average, nor an abstract 'ideal' behavior.

The Overthrow of Aristotle

As the scientific culmination of the non-elementalistic principle we do not merely treat *man-as-a-whole*, but we treat *man-as-a-whole-in-an-environment*. The prevalent outlook of many scientists and particularly of philosophers, sociologists, leaders, etc., etc., can be considered *Aristotelian*; for, in the main, its fundamentals were laid down by Aristotle. During the more than two thousand years since Aristotle, barring some exceptions, the fundamentals of the Aristotelian system have remained unaltered. The Euclidean system in geometry and the Newtonian system in scientific formulations are parts of the Aristotelian system.

The main characteristic of the Aristotelian system is *identification*, logically expressed as "A is A" and taken over into the linguistic field, leading to the failure to distinguish between words and symbols and the 'things' signified; also between the various levels of abstraction within the verbal field. A second characteristic of the Aristotelian system is *elementalism*; considering as absolutely distinct, factors which are interrelated, such as the "body *and* mind," "intellect *and* emotions," "individual *and* environment,"' and "space *and* time" dualisms. The viewpoint which stands for a non-dualistic treatment of the functioning of the human organism is called *non-elementalistic*, and this we now know to be a more correct orientation.

These verbal splits are carried over into the linguistic activity as the "subject *and* predicate" (actor and action), "form *and* substance" dualisms. A third characteristic of the Aristotelian system is the *two-valued causality*, expressed in logic as "A is either B or not B." With the growing importance of probability methods in science, this outlook is clearly inadequate and misleading.

In general, the Aristotelian system (such as still prevails today among nearly all 'civilized' peoples outside of a few specialists in regard to their special subjects) embodies certain attitudes *verbally* formulated over two thousand years ago. Due to their comprehensiveness and aptness in the conditions then prevailing (especially the state of knowledge) these generalizations took deep root.

Euclidean geometry, based on an ideal, yet non-existent, three-dimensional space, further developed the Aristotelian system in one respect. The Newtonian scientific system, basing itself on the dualism of matter and energy, further developed it in another respect. Most of the developments taking place during the last 2000 years ultimately fit into the Aristotelian system. Nevertheless, more recent developments

of science, especially during the twentieth century, have definitely shown the Aristotelian system to be inadequate, and false to facts. These developments have taken place so far in isolated fields, and have not been synthesized into a system. Alfred Korzybski's attempt, leading to the formulation of a non-Aristotelian system, is the first comprehensive effort in this direction.

Briefly, the three directions in which the Aristotelian system has been revised are: first, the Non-Euclidean geometries are shown to be valid for the (1946) actual four-dimensional space-time as against but including the Euclidean geometry, which is valid only for three-dimensional space. Second, the Newtonian system has been replaced by the Einsteinian system, which has among other improvements dissolved the "space *and* time" and "matter *and* energy" dualisms inherent in the Newtonian system. Third, in the field of psycho-neurology, the electro-colloidal study of life processes as well as the psychiatric study of various types of behavior, has removed the "body *and* mind" and "intellect *and* emotions" dualisms. These lead to the formulations of *non-identity, nonelementalism,* and *consciousness of abstracting* as the fundamental principles of all 'knowing,' and of adjustment and sanity.

A study of these departures from the Aristotelian system has led to a reconsideration of the role of 'knowledge' in life. This leads us to the study of neuro-linguistic processes in human beings and in animals. This is the culmination of the scientific activity especially during the last 50 years. Now the issues are generalized, formed into a systematic methodology, and the stage is set for a complete synthesis and revision of existing knowledge in the light of these principles.

SURINDAR SURI, NOTES ON "TOWARDS AN AGE OF SCIENCE"
From *The Lakeville Journal*, issues of March 27-April 3, 1947.

Alfred Korzybski's non-Aristotelian system and the science of general semantics derive from many sources in the intellectual movements that were prominent at the commencement of the twentieth century. One of the most important of these was the studies in the allied fields of language, logic, and mathematics. Much work had been done on the foundations of mathematics during the nineteenth century. These logico-mathematical developments found their classic expression in the Principia Mathematica of Whitehead and Russell. Researches in language and symbolism were also closely allied, for mathematics came to be considered of the nature of language. Charles S. Peirce (1839-1914) in the United States had covered the field of logic-mathematics-language in his studies which are of great importance. The most influential work on language and symbolism undoubtedly has been The Meaning of Meaning by Ogden and Richards.

Parallel with and influencing the development of mathematics, logic and

language, has been the striking growth of the "natural sciences," and Korzybski also derives from it. Physics has been developed most of all, having undergone a two-fold revolution in the form of the relativity theory and the quantum theories. These have had a profound influence on thinking in all fields and have given great impetus to the "philosophies of science." Writings of Henri Poincare, Einstein, Bohr, Planck, Russell, Whitehead, Eddington, Jeans, *et al*, have exercised a great deal of influence.

The Vienna Circle

One of the consequences of the great flowering of the natural sciences was the founding of the "Vienna Circle" during the 1920s. This group derived its positivist tradition mostly from the writings of Ernst Mach, but sought to avoid the shortcomings of his views, especially his neglect of logic and mathematics in science. Prominent among those belonging to this group were H. Hahn, Otto Neurath, and P. Frank, among the original members, and Moritz Schlick, Rudolf Carnap and others. The central thesis of the Vienna Circle was the anti-metaphysical doctrine, *viz*, every proposition in order to be scientifically meaningful must be (in principle) verifiable. There was a consistent all-round application of the scientific method, and in cooperation with the American pragmatists (Dewey, Morris, etc.) the Vienna group sponsored the Unity of Science Movement. In its later developments this movement has not influenced Korzybski, being contemporaneous with his work, but it is on similar lines and of great interest and significance.

Besides the revolutions in the "physical sciences," we must also take note of the developments in the biological and psychological sciences. Some of the most influential among these are the theories of Sigmund Freud, Pavlov, Henry Head, etc., and the colloidal interpretation of the psycho-physical processes by Prof. Burridge of the Medical College, Lucknow. These, then, are some of the many strands that go to the making of Korzybski's system.

Briefly, the two types of theories and hypotheses included in the non-Aristotelian system are, firstly, of the mathematic-logic-linguistic type, and secondly of the natural science type. It appears to me that the strongest influence on Korzybski is the development of formal logic during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Peano, Hilbert, Frege, Whitehead and Russell). He has carried the process of formalization of logic, mathematics, and language to something like its logical conclusion: *Korzybski has formalized the whole of knowledge*. This is apparent not only from the great importance he gives to mathematics and language, it is apparent most of all from his assertion that the only content of knowledge is *structure*.

But, and this is undoubtedly a great achievement, he has supplemented this

formalism both from the 'subjective' and the 'objective' angles. For one thing, he is interested in knowledge, including science and mathematics, *only* as human activities. For another thing, he takes due notice of the 'objective' world, firstly by bringing out the importance of the unspeakable first-order affects, and secondly by insisting that human formulations have only partial 'objective' validity. These, perhaps, constitute the main significance of his principle of non-identity.

In Korzybski's first book, *Manhood of Humanity* (1921), he tried to formulate an adequate definition of 'man.' The distinctive human characteristic, as formulated by Korzybski, was *time-binding* — the capacity to gather up experiences from individual to individual and especially from generation to generation. He defined animals as *space-binders* (lacking the capability to gather up experiences and document them via symbols as humans) and plants as *energy-binders* (lacking the capability to move about in space as animals). The main reason for the human miseries was that, instead of acting as time-binders, humans were trying to adjust themselves in terms of the space-binding animals.

Science and Sanity: An Introduction to Non-Aristotelian Systems and General Semantics

Science and Sanity (1933) is undoubtedly a great work. What strikes one at first is its wide sweep, taking in all the main branches of knowledge. No one before had covered so many different fields so thoroughly. Equally great is the aim of the work, to help establish a new way of life. *Science and Sanity* provides the necessary intellectual re-orientation, and points the way ahead.

As the name indicates, the chief aim in *Science and Sanity* is to establish psycho-physical semantic health, by ensuring the optimum working of the human organism, and especially by protecting the organism against harmful semantic influences (propaganda, etc.), and checking the consequent misuse or atrophy of the semantic functions. The main instrument for these purposes is the consciousness of abstracting.

Korzybski clearly realizes that mere intellectual approval of his principles is not enough. In order to be effective, his formulations — especially the core principle of consciousness of abstracting — must be learned through exercise of the motor-nervous system. For this purpose, he has invented the Structural Differential.

The parabola at the top represents the Event, which is the unit happening. The small circles (holes) represent characteristics of the event. The parabola is broken off to show its limitless extension, i.e., the number of characteristics that can be assigned to an event is limitless. The large circle represents the 'Object,' which we define as the recognizable part of an event. The small circles (holes) here stand

for the characteristics of the object which are finite though very large in number. The threads or strings hanging from the parabola represent characteristics of the Event which have been included in the Object. The loose-hanging threads, not connected to the Object, represent characteristics of the event that have been left out during the process of abstracting through which the nervous system has formed the Object. It is, therefore, important to remember that characteristics have been left out, and this constitutes the *consciousness of abstracting*.

The disc to the left of the Object represents the object formed by an animal. Here the diagram indicates firstly the absolute difference between the abstracting of humans vs. animals; this might be termed the vertical difference. Secondly, there is the horizontal difference in that the 'object' is the only abstraction for animals; humans, on the other hand, pass on from the Object level to further abstractions, the first of these representing the label or name given to the object. The label is verbal, speakable. According to Korzybski, "As animals have no speech, in the human sense, and as we have called the verbal labeling (including the meaning associated therewith) of the object 'second order abstractions' we say that animals do not abstract in their higher orders."

A human being has the capacity to abstract in indefinite number of orders, represented in the illustration by the chain of labels. Whenever a statement is made about a statement, we are reaching a higher abstraction.

The last of the labels in the diagram is shown attached to the parabola representing the Event by a long arrow. This arrow is meant to indicate that the characteristics of the event (which are represented by small circles) are known by means of the highest abstractions (inferences) of science at that date. The particular use of the Structural Differential is as a means for non-Aristotelian training, particularly the consciousness of abstracting. The diagram, or the model, is non-verbal. One can see and touch it, and by maintaining silence, one can get the feel of it, exercising numerous nerve centres in the body.

Science and Sanity can be difficult to comprehend — a general, up-to-date understanding of the diverse empirical and deductive sciences is a prerequisite. The book itself is a bulky volume of over 800 large pages printed in small type. Korzybski discourages superficial study. In fact he requires actual practice from those who would try to understand and benefit from his work, but this is not an easy matter.

Quite apart from the specific principles given, such as the principle of *non-identity* and specific formulations such as the content of knowledge, etc., what is most significant is the consistent application of the scientific methodology to all spheres of life. It will be recalled that this is also the aim of other schools of scientific philosophy, especially the logical-empiricist school (the Vienna

Circle and its successors). But, apart from formulating general principles, such as the principle of verifiability (or the elimination of metaphysics), the main work of this group consists of various studies in linguistics, symbolic logic and scientific philosophy. Korzybski has put the different principles into practice, though much in his own way. Also, he covers a much wider field, takes from all schools, develops various doctrines where necessary and, most important of all, while accepting the principle of verifiability, he establishes the relation with the unspeakable 'objective' world, the failure of positivists all along to account adequately for that which was undoubtedly the life-giving force to metaphysics.

While scientific methodology is applied consistently all round, Korzybski also recognizes its limitations: the field of first-order affects is not its sphere, yet these are more important. Scientific formulations have only partial validity (expressed in infinite-valued probability). While intuition, etc., are important sources of knowledge, scientific methodology constitutes the final criterion and it is meaningless to talk of any 'knowledge' which is above or beyond science. In these times of emotionalism and despondency, Korzybski's powerful espousal of the scientific method, giving practical application to many social problems; his effort to achieve the synthesis of scientific knowledge, reducing the umbra of problems still outside science; his assertion that ignorance of the main theoretical issues constitutes a pathological factor in the modern world — all these are great services in the cause of enlightenment.

Surindar Suri, Common Sense About India
From the Institute's archives, marked "Draft", dated 1947. Apparently never published.

During the past fifteen months in India, over one hundred thousand human beings have been killed or wounded; millions have been uprooted and displaced. There has been incalculable destruction. Industrial and agricultural production has slowed down to a very low level. A widespread famine appears inevitable. Less than three months after attaining independence, India presents the picture of a moral and material debacle. If the new administration does not succeed in bringing about peace and order very soon, the way will then be open for an authoritarian, dictatorial regime, of the left or of the right.

To those of us who fought for a free and democratic India, the questions arise: "What is wrong with India?" and, "How can we remove the danger of totalitarianism dictatorship and to carry out the program of raising the standard of living of the people?"

Obviously, the present situation in India cannot be separated from her past history. Differences between the different religious communities have existed for centuries. Everyday life of the common man in India has changed so little over hundreds of years that struggles and conflicts of centuries ago seem to him to have taken place only the other day. Take the three thousand-year-old epic story of Rama, the sacred king, who overcame and killed Ravana, the evil king of Ceylon. That legend still stirs the imagination of the Hindu masses and impels them to re-establish *Rama Rajya* — the reign of Rama — a sort of golden age, and gives religious quality to Indian nationalist movements.

Then there were the first invasions of India by the Moslems, almost a thousand years ago, when Mahmud of Ghanzi, the Moslem invader from central Asia, entered India through the north-western mountain passes and swept across the Indian plains, looting, pillaging and smashing the idols of Hindu deities. Similar were the two hundred-year old conflicts between the newly-formed religious community of Sikhs and certain section of Moslems in the northwest of India. Although these conflicts did not take place along sharply-defined religious lines, many people in India today act as if these bygone happenings concerned them directly and immediately. This attitude has been sharpened by the political developments in recent years. The bitter historical memories have been revived, but the predominating aspect of India's social history — the great record of cooperation between different religious communities — has been buried. India's political leaders and former rulers — Hindus, Moslems, and British alike — have not only failed to check, but, through their actions and policies, inflamed the religious divisions, latent

hostilities, and baser human emotions.

When the British first secured a political foothold in India in the mid-eighteenth century, the Moslem empire was on the wane. A Hindu revival had led to a struggle between Hindu and Moslem potentates; in the northwest of India the Sikhs were struggling for supremacy. At the time of the British withdrawal two centuries later, the picture of India is surprisingly similar — Hindus, Moslems, and Sikhs struggle for power. But the present conflict is sharper. It affects the masses of people instead of being confined to the comparatively small group of political adventurers and their mercenary armies.

The ancient divisions and hostilities between Indian communities survived the British rule mainly because of the pragmatic tradition in British political life. Their policy in India was to recognize and protect the prevailing Indian customs, religions, legal and economic organizations, in so far as that did not directly conflict with the economic and political interest of the British. They organized an efficient administration. The machinery of "law and order" protected the interests of British merchants and industrials as well as those of the Indian feudal landowners, native princes and religious orthodoxies. Had the British tried to modernize or alter Indian institutions, they would have met with serious resistance from Indians themselves. On the other hand, by recognizing and protecting the established social, economic, religious order, the British gained allegiance of many Indian classes, who formed a kind of bulwark for them during the bitter political struggle against the Indian nationalist movement in the inter war years of the twentieth century. However, as a result of British paternalism, social life in India decayed and degenerated. The prince, the landlord, and the priest have maintained their hold over the people, and hindered modernization.

We must credit the British rule in India with the establishment of modern institutions such as schools and colleges, certain aspects of the political administration, their commercial and industrial enterprises, which met the needs of the industrial age better than their Indian counterparts. English education opened up communication with western thinking.

Liberalism was born out of the accord between the Indians and the British during the nineteenth century. But social and political liberal movement was necessarily restricted to the more receptive individuals among the Indian upper classes, and they failed to head off a bitter struggle between the British administration and Indian nationalists.

The political development of India during the twentieth century reveals it as an integral part of the modern world. In the opening years of the century

Japan defeated the czarist Russian empire in the east, and this was hailed as the first triumph of a resurgent Asia against European domination. The educated and politically-sensitive Indian middle classes were stirred. These middle classes readily adopted nationalism, the political doctrine of the time, which Japan seemed to have applied so successfully, and which seemed to suit their own condition as a subject of people.

In the First World War, the Allies accepted national self-determination as the governing principle for post-war political settlement in Europe. Indians were greatly chagrined when this principle was not applied to them. After the war, anti-British mass movements were started under the leadership of Gandhi. The demand for India's independence was undeniable under the generally-accepted principle of national self-determination, which was regarded as a moral doctrine. That was the crux of the problem — the British would not (or could not) quit India, but the Indian nationalists unquestioningly believed that independence was their birthright. The maintenance of a good government became a secondary consideration. The British countered the nationalist movement with partial political reforms coupled with repression.

On the nationalist side, there developed a highly-emotional attitude towards "independence," and a purely negative attitude towards everything British. In this highly-charged emotional atmosphere rational thinking was impossible. The present conflict in India between Hindus and Moslems is almost a run off of the anti-British struggle of Indian nationalists, who were mainly drawn from the Hindus, the majority community. Statistically, the Hindus contain a larger proportion of the educated, and politically active individuals than do the Moslems. But the vast majority of both communities are equally poor. They each need the same material and cultural betterment, and protection from the dominant classes. Political division of the two communities took place under the British-drawn constitution of 1919, when the electoral districts for local, provincial, and central legislative bodies were divided along religious lines. Hindus and Moslems voted separately and elected legislators belonging to their respective religions. But the Moslem demand for a separate independent state is less than ten years old. It sprang out of the highly-tense situation that prevailed between Indian nationalists and the British, into which the Moslems adopted the attitude of a third party. To an observer on the scene it appeared that the religious-political consciousness of the Moslems was suddenly aroused through the influence of prevailing excitement.

Fragmentation of India, with the accompanying slaughter and destruction, is an outstanding example of the tragedy of nationalism in our time. Any

substantial group of people that claims separate nationhood, and can back its claims with votes (emphasizing it with violence, if necessary), cannot be denied its claim logically. The British could not deny the logic of the Moslem claim, based on self-determination. Yet, in a world where national divisions have long been obsolescent, the emergence of two new states appears ironic.

Commenting on rioting and the flight of populations in India, an American observer recently wrote: "Freedom for India has been a goal and an ideal to civilized men all over the world so long that it will be hard to prevent some echo of… sneers from reverberating in our hears. And it is impossible to prevent the doubt from arising in our minds as to whether the Indian people are ready for self-government." (1) This misses the crucial point, that national freedom is outmoded in our technologically-united world. It leads only to disintegration and destruction. What constitutes 'nationality' is not artificially determinable — it must be left to the sentiments of a people concerned, and to those who arouse those sentiments. A 'nation' is not a functional unit, and it now divides mankind and causes conflicts and destruction. India's political leaders uncritically adopted the creed of *nationalism*. But that could hardly be avoided in the existing political organization of the world. What happens in India is inseparable from the events in the rest of the world, and the continually growing trouble in India cannot be solved in isolation.

There is a world-wide failure to deal with the problems and issues that face mankind. The tragic happenings in India fit into the world picture; they don't mean just a national failure. Mankind is unable at present to solve its problems rationally and peacefully. The fundamental problem appears to be this: *Can we remove our undesirable political traits, such as nationalism, racialism, etc., without a thorough change in human behavior*? In other words, are our political, economic, and similar other troubles manifestations of a deep-seated human maladjustment? If so, what are the causes of that insanity?

In the opinion of an outstanding psychiatrist, "The reason for this is that, through sheer ignorance, and certainly without meaning to, our society has failed to develop, in the overwhelming majority of people, mental and spiritual characteristics capable of the degree of maturity which the tasks of the world demand." (2) The point is that nationalism, isolationism, racialism, and other traits that bedevil human life today are embedded in the prevailing non-scientific orientation of human behavior. We cannot go here into the character of the scientific re-orientation that is needed. (3) But it is clear that the solution of the world's problems must be sought in retraining human behavior. Without sane and mentally healthy human beings, there cannot be a rational and peaceful

world. Except in a peaceful world, no country can have a peaceful life.

India's problem is a world problem. It is a human problem which must be solved by the joint efforts of mankind as a whole. Unless the underlying maladaption and insanity is removed, we shall see in India — as we have seen elsewhere — conflicts between the left and right, between one group and another, and the inevitable establishment of tyranny.

Irving Lee, Surindar Suri, and Robyn Skynner at the 1947 IGS Seminar-Workshop.

TELL ME WHAT YOU'RE THINKING: NOTES ON CREATIVITY FROM THE IGS NEW YORK FALL CONFERENCE

PHILIP VASSALLO, ED.D.*

For me, the agenda had to be about creativity. The Institute for General Semantics promoted the 55th Korzybski Memorial Lecture by Leonard Shlain under the title "Right Brain/Left Brain: Hemispheric Lateralization and Its Effects on Religion, Culture, Gender, and History" and the symposium on the following day as "Mind and Consciousness: Understanding /Reconciling /Integrating Symbol Systems and Nervous Systems." I had spent the best part of 2007 focusing my energies on better understanding creativity — what it is, how it appears, how one acquires it — so these events seemed the ideal opportunity for me to integrate what I had been listening to, reading, and discussing over the past year.

Getting Started

As a writer and writing consultant, I am most concerned about connections between creativity and composing. Before 2007, I had read many classics on the writing process (James Britton, Janet Emig, and Donald M. Murray), rhetorical theory (Harold Bloom, William Empson, and Robert Penn Warren), writing precision (William Safire), and writing economy (William Zinsser). This year, however, I ventured toward creativity from the perspectives of other domains, including psychology (Mihaly Csikszentmihaly, the 1996 Korzybski Lecturer), philosophy (Hannah Arendt and Bertrand Russell), semiotics (Ferdinand de Saussure, Charles Sanders Peirce, and Roland Barthes), critical theory (Teodor Adorno, Mikhail Bakhtin, Michel Foucault, and Antonio Gramsci), the intersection of science and art (David Bohm), and practical applications (Tony Buzan and Edward Tufte). With this mindset on the inspirations and manifestations creativity, what better way to capture a glimpse into its source than to attend a lecture titled "Right Brain/Left Brain: Hemispheric Lateralization and Its Effects on Religion, Culture,

* Philip Vassallo, Ed.D., an IGS member, is author of *The Art of On-the-Job Writing* and *The Art of E-Mail Writing*, and periodically writes a column titled "Words on the Line" for *ETC: A Review of General Semantics.*

Gender, and History"? And with such a reading regimen loosely rooted in my consciousness, what better way to make sense of what I'd been learning all year than by participating in a symposium called "Mind and Consciousness: Understanding / Reconciling / Integrating Symbol Systems and Nervous Systems"? I wanted to gather whatever information I could to improve my own communication skills, energize my consulting business, and create new opportunities for my clients. So was the trip into New York on that mid-fall Friday evening and Saturday morning worth it?

In spades. I walked away from both events capturing many provocative aphorisms, notating insightful commentary from speakers and guests for future reference, sketching several blueprints for upcoming projects, and, as you can see, writing this article. What more could I ask for?

The Korzybski Memorial Lecture on the evening of October 26, 2007, at the Princeton Club and the Symposium on the following day at Fordham University needed the collaborative efforts of a virtual village of enlightened and eager sponsors to help make the conference affordable and stimulating for invited guests. IGS received assists from the New York Society for General Semantics (NYSGS), Friends of the Institute of Noetic Sciences (FIONS), the Media Ecology Association (MEA), and Fordham University's Department of Communication and Media Studies (CMS).

The Lecture

The guest lecturer, Leonard Shlain, would have a full life without being the author of three widely discussed books: *Art and Physics, The Alphabet Versus the Goddess*, and *Sex, Time and Power*, the reason IGS sought him to keynote the conference. Shlain is also a surgeon, Chairman of Laparoscopic Surgery at the California Pacific Medical Center, and Associate Professor of surgery at the University of California San Francisco. Shlain set the stage for his hour-long PowerPoint presentation with a compelling question: Why has the Western concept of one God, and one male God, created so much destruction? More specifically, he inquired into why Judaism, Christianity, and Islam have caused so much bloodshed over the past three millennia? Referencing scientific data, historical examples, and intriguing stories, he followed his premise to the ultimate culprit for our proclivity for mass annihilation: a shift in humankind from predominately right-brain to left-brain thinking. This manic swing, says Shlain, was forged by the alphabet and literacy.

I, for one, do not accept the idea that the unimaginable violence committed by humans was incubated solely by the Israelites and mass produced exclusively by the religions that emerged from Judaism. Violence has been the province of

most human cultures, literate and illiterate. Nevertheless, Shlain certainly gave me plenty to think about regarding the printed word. Indeed, could humans have communicated their political plots, war plans, and extermination decrees without literature? Could women have been subjugated so preemptively and enduringly without society's greater reliance on books, which transmitted community mores to mass audiences at unprecedented speeds? As I listened to Shlain and watched his relentless procession of artwork slides conjuring images of the very progress responsible for our failure to communicate, I could not help but imagine how different our world would be without printed words—and, ultimately, a world without language—which general semantics frequently reminds me to consider. Discounting those concepts short that summon basic threats and opportunities for survival (hunger, food, thirst, water, choked, air), many others which rule our lives—success, financial security, planning, working, playing, teaching, understanding, arguing, believing, and the like—possibly would be absent from our consciousness. Needless to say, Shlain was not fashioning an anti-reading argument, but he was asking us, as did Jean-Jacques Rousseau in *The Social Contract* and *Emile*, to reflect on humanity's march down such a self-destructive path and the saving grace of returning to a more centered-brain approach to solving our environmental, social, and political ills.

The Symposium

The Saturday, October 27, symposium offered more of the same intellectual and creative stimulation. All of the presentations offered ideas for me to ponder and practice in my various personal and professional roles.

In the first panel, Martin Levinson's "Who's the Smartest of Them All?" featured excerpts of his latest book *Practical Fairy Tales for Everyday Living*. His humorous readings from real-life situations bestowed lucid reminders that my job as a general semanticist is to provide clarity and integrity in personal relationships—even where romance is concerned. Katherine Liepe-Levinson's "The Brain, Evolution, and Story" spoke to the writer in me when she described how problem solving and persistence are elements of story. Wendy L. Hurwitz's "Intuition: Experiencing the Unknowable" addressed my public speaking side when focusing on inner quiet and asserting "You can't broadcast and receive at the same time."

In Panel Two, Gary Chapin's "The Semantic School: Teaching the Student-as-a-Whole-in-Her-or-His-Semantic-Environment" gave me plenty to talk about to my wife, a middle school language arts teacher. I especially appreciated Chapin's focus on the oft-ignored student's interpretation of administrative attempts to improve the quality of education. The highlight of conference, at least for me, was Frank J.

Scardilli's impassioned talk, "What Every Critical Thinking Person Should Know about Law, Lawyers, and the Tyranny of Illusion." From Scardill's many years as a lawyer came the claim, "Lawyers deceive because they are not good mapmakers," backing his point with numerous examples. His persuasive argument that the legal tradition was seriously flawed resonated most. Simply stated, insists Scardilli, the *rules*, which are overly complicated, plus the *facts*, which are biased, equal the *decision*, which is fraught with difficulties. His allusion to Chief Justice Charles Evans Hughes's observation, "Ninety percent of our decisions are emotional; the ten percent of rationale supplies the reason," paints a picture in direct contradiction of the blindfolded woman holding the balanced scales: of the human inclination to believe first and then find the data. Incidentally, Francis Bacon said a full three centuries before Hughes, "Human understanding, when it has once adopted an opinion … draws all things else to support and agree with it." Scardilli concluded by admonishing the legal profession to "win him over, not win over him; bring him to his senses, bring him not to his knees." My takeaway from this fascinating presentation was to be an even more vigilant listener of "hard news" stories and any a more critical reader of ant document purporting to tell facts as they are, whatever that means. Annemarie Colbin's "Right Brain, Left Brain, and How They Affect Our Food Choices" was perfect morning-ender for me, as I was just in the beginning stages of changing my eating habits. Colbin cogently explained how we use our left brain to rationalize our right brain food cravings, and she plenty of practical tips, none of which included the dreaded left-brain calorie counting technique.

Panel Three began with Jane Hughes Gignoux's "What's My Story? Who Am I *Really*," which kept my eye on the power of storytelling, an activity of great interest to me, as I am developing an Influence and Persuasion course of my own and conducting independent research on storytelling as a means of conveying facts, critiquing performance, corroborating positions, and crystallizing plans. Lance Strate's "The Ten Commandments and the Semantic Environment: Understanding the Decalogue through General Semantics and Media Ecology" was highly relevant to my own Christian faith, because it required me to look at the *Word* as *words*, which is always a challenge for a believer, who must shun such worldly pursuits. Frank E. X. Dance's "Ivan Petrovich Pavlov's *Reflection on Mind and Consciousness*" delivered excellent material to supplement my philosophical and linguistic viewpoints on relationships between perception and language. Dance's examination of what Pavlov described as our subcortical, first cortical, and second cortical signal system opened a window of understanding about how images, and even words absent the images they represent, affect our nervous system.

Vanessa Biard-Schaeffer opened the final panel with "Spy & Psy," a detailed

investigation of our ability to make claims based on linking relationships, generalizations, identification, and inferences, all of which are useful to my corporate presentations on writing improvement. Hillel Schiller's "Symbols Are Not Alone in the Nervous System" resurrected the Korzybski-Hayakawa debate about how to best convey levels of abstraction, vital issues to contemplate in general semantics. Milton Dawes, whose *ETC* articles have instructed me for many years, closed the symposium with "Calculus a Powerful Psycho-logical Tool." No one could have summarized the conference better, as Dawes reminded attendees of the need to possess high awareness of inner and outer environments and their connection to communication. As I listened to Dawes label *extreme general semantics* as "the study a continuous function by following its development through indefinitely smaller steps," I could not help but acknowledge that I have already incorporated many of his ideas into my training and coaching sessions.

Pulling Out

I walked away from the IGS New York conference with a raised consciousness and full appreciation of Bertrand Russell's concluding words from his brilliant essay, "The Value of Philosophy":

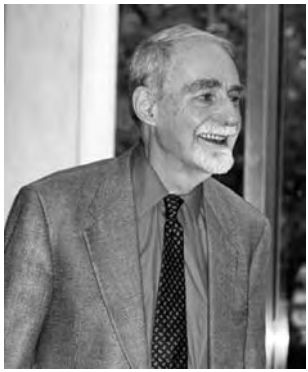
> Philosophy is to be studied, not for the sake of any definite answers to its questions, since no definite answers can, as a rule, be known to be true, but rather for the sake of the questions themselves; because these questions enlarge our conception of what is possible, enrich our intellectual imagination and diminish the dogmatic assurance which closes the mind against speculation; but above all because through the greatness of the universe which philosophy contemplates, the mind is also rendered great, and becomes capable of that union with the universe which constitutes the highest good.

I was not looking for answers at the IGS Conference; rather, I was looking for more interesting, innovative ways to frame the questions—and, for that matter, to find simply better questions than the ones I had been posing to myself and others. The IGS Conference gave me these gifts and more. And what is at the heart of creativity but asking questions!

So many people are praiseworthy for their work at this conference. Special thanks go to Master of Ceremonies Allen Flagg, Trustee of IGS and President of the New York Society for General Semantics, who ensured that everyone felt welcomed. Watching Flagg, who is 30 years my senior, enthusiastically and

gracefully work the room on that Friday night at the Princeton Club and the following morning and afternoon at Fordham made me forget the aches and pains of my middle-age body. He has a knack for making anyone in his presence feel like the smartest person in the room. Thanks also to Martin Levinson, Vice-president of IGS, Vice President of NYSGS, editor of the perennial book review in *ETC: A Review of General Semantics*, and committed author of numerous books linking general semantics to everyday life. My appreciation also goes to Lance Strate, MEA President and Graduate Director, CMS at Fordham, for generously arranging for Fordham to host the conference and, more importantly, for his good-humor and penetrating observations.

Jane Hughes Gignoux



Allen Flagg

Frank E. X. Dance

Sumposium Audience

Photos by Kathy Liepe-Levinson

REPORT FROM THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH ANNUAL CONVENTION

MARISA SLEETER*

Managing the Institute's booth for the annual NCTE convention in New York City was a wonderful experience that not only promoted general semantics to English teachers, but also reminded me why I am excited to be a part of this organization. Jackie Parenti, Stacy Stockdale and I traveled to New York City in mid-November to staff the Institute's NCTE booth, but we came back to Texas with much more than we expected.

Stacy had been to national teacher conventions before, but Jackie and I had only manned booths for GS at college student activity fairs. We agreed that this conference had a great energy. The teachers who attended seemed eager to learn new teaching methods and were very open and receptive to learning new ideas.

Many teachers came to the convention to buy books and materials for their classrooms and to gather new lesson plan and activity ideas (along with having a good excuse to visit NYC). With so many book vendors and companies trying to pitch their products, people commented that the Institute's booth was unique in its presentation and content.

It was interesting to watch people skip over other booths and gravitate towards ours. The dark purple backdrop of the booth itself can be very eye-catching, but when you add a spinning Benham Disc, a pile of newly-designed brochures, and three energetic young women, you have a combination that not many English teachers wanted to pass up. We had fun explaining general semantics, handing out copies of *ETC*, selling t-shirts (one teacher even bought t-shirts for her entire department), and directing people to our new website full of information, teacher resources, publications for sale and (coming soon) online courses. Throughout the convention, we heard comments like "this is the most interesting booth here," "thank you for being here," and "this is the only booth worth visiting." A number

*Marisa Sleeter has worked in young adult outreach for the Institute since completing her Berman Scholar internship in August 2007. She graduated from Texas Christian University in May 2007.

of people also remarked that they were drawn to our booth because our youth and energy reminded them of their students; they wanted to see why these three young ladies would be so committed to something like general semantics.

Personally, manning the booth reinvigorated my love of general semantics. I explained what I could about its principles and history, how it has helped me, and how it could help in the classroom. Seeing the realization and excitement on the faces of the visiting teachers reminded me of why I was initially drawn to general semantics.

Although Stacy had been to New York City before, it was the first time for Jackie and me, so we did our fair share of sightseeing before and after the conference. NYC was amazing in every way, and the diversity and energy of the city was reflected everywhere we went. Stacy and I were fortunate enough to meet with anthropologist, author, curator of the American Museum of Natural History, and 2005 Alfred Korzybski Memorial Lecture speaker, Dr. Robert L. Carneiro.

Overall, I count the trip as a great success. Because of our booth at the trade show, we have new members, new contacts, new personal outlooks on GS, and hundreds of teachers who are equipped to begin weaving GS principles into their classrooms to a new generation of eager minds.

Dates and Indexes

NASA Broadcasts Beatles Tune to Universe to Celebrate Anniversaries

On February 4, NASA beamed a recording of the Beatles song "Across the Universe" directly into deep space. The event marked the 40th anniversary of the recording of the song, the 45th anniversary of the establishment of the Deep Space Network, and the 50th anniversary of the launch of the first US satellite, Explorer 1. The lyrics hint at the influence of visits by the group to India in the late 60s, and suggest an awareness of both the overwhelming volume ("Words are flowing out like endless rain into a paper cup") and potential variability ("They slither wildly as they slip away across the universe") of human verbalizations:

One might like to think that these potent and hopeful lyrics will spread out into the universe and perhaps fall on some alien ears or impinge on some alien computer screens in such a way that the aliens form a positive image of our species. Sadly, that seems like mere science fantasy. Scientists tell us that, in "empty" space, radio waves lose their coherence quite rapidly, relatively speaking, due to interfering waves and dust, so that even receivers on Alpha Centauri, our nearest stellar neighbor, would at best receive the simpler carrier wave, with a whole lot of noise on top. Of course, some folks described their music like that when it first came out!

Institute Events

On October 26, the Institute sponsored the 55th Annual Alfred Korzybski Memorial Lecture in New York City. This year, author, surgeon and educator, Dr. Leonard Shlain spoke on "Right Brain/Left Brain: Hemispheric Lateralization and its Effects on Religion, Culture, Gender and History." Shlain has written three best-selling books and serves as associate professor of laparoscopic brain surgery at the University of California San Francisco.

The following day, IGS joined the New York Society for General Semantics, Friends of the Institute of Noetic Sciences, the Media Ecology Association, and Fordham Communications and Media Studies in hosting a symposium titled "Mind and Consciousness: Understanding / Reconciling / Integrating Symbol Systems and Nervous Systems." Before the symposium began, Lance Strate of MEA presented the Susanne K. Langer Award for Outstanding Scholarship in the Ecology of Symbolic Form to IGS trustee Martin Levinson, for his book *Sensible Thinking for Turbulent Times.* See a more complete report by Phil Vassallo on page 95.

Artist in Solo Show

You can see more works by Shelly Jyoti, our cover artist for this issue, at her solo exhibition titled "Beyond Mithila: Exploring the Decorative," February 29 - March 27, 2008 at WomanMade Gallery, 685 N Milwaukee Ave, Chicago

Institute of General Semantics Hosts Wiley College Students

On November 30, David Maas brought some students from his General Semantics and Critical Thinking class on a field trip to Read House. David teaches at Wiley College, one of several in the Texas network of "historically black colleges." It's located in Marshall, TX, near the border with Louisiana, about a 3.5-hour drive from Fort Worth.

IGS at NCTE, New York City
November 16-20, 2007

Lance Strate presents Langer Award to Martin Levinson

IGS 55th AKML and Symposium
New York City
October 26-27, 2007

Speaker Leonard Shlain

Attendee Ben Hauck

GENERAL SEMANTICS IN INDIA

A Special Issue Edited by
Steve Stockdale

Dedicated to Mr. Balvant K. Parekh